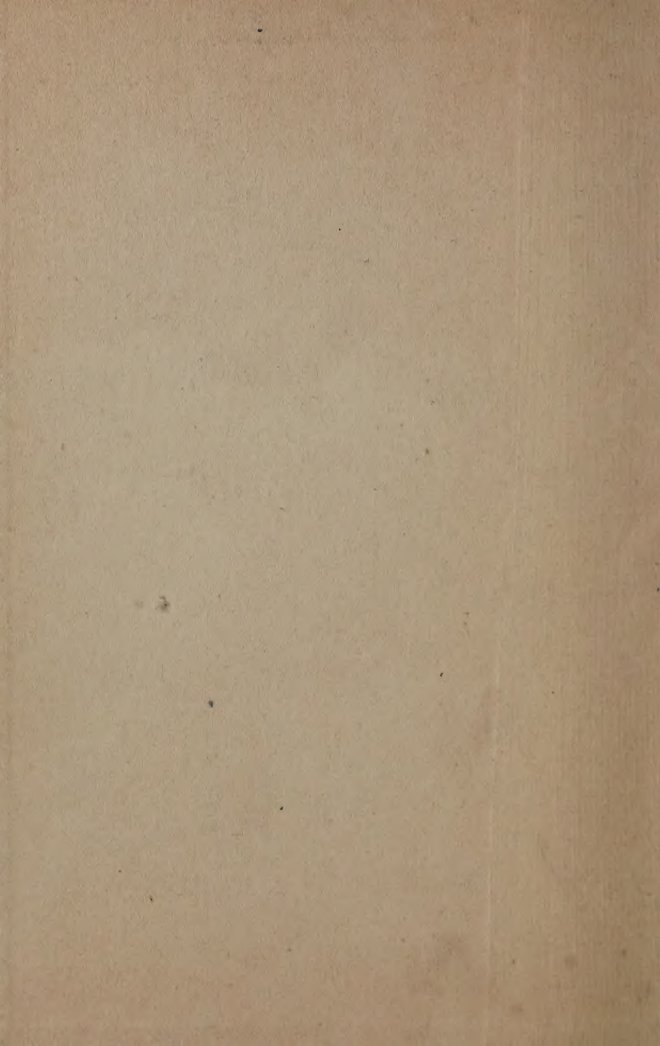
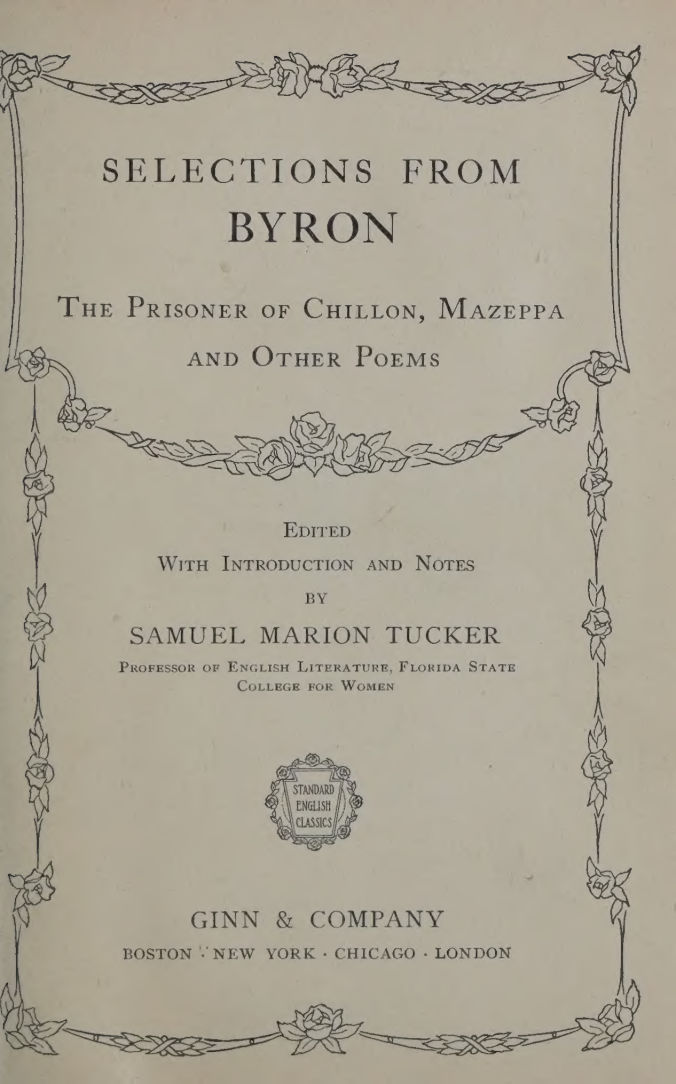






GEORGE GORDON, LORD BYRON

After the portrait by Kramer



SELECTIONS FROM BYRON

THE PRISONER OF CHILLON, MAZEPPA
AND OTHER POEMS

EDITED

WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY

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TO
WILLIAM PETERFIELD TRENT
PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH LITERATURE
IN COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
THIS LITTLE VOLUME IS INSCRIBED .
IN GRATITUDE AND ESTEEM

P R E F A C E

The primary purpose of this book is to give the young reader some insight into Byron's genius by presenting for study and for reading those of his poems which should make the most immediate appeal. For such a purpose much of Byron's poetry is admirably fitted, since, as a whole, it is not abstruse in its subject-matter, is lucid in its expression, and, above all, is spirited and energetic.

To teach the essential spirit of literature, not grammar, philology, or rhetoric, surely should be our aim when we present poetry to our classes. Even history, biography, mythology, or anything else, except as these are absolutely essential to a proper appreciation of the poem, are not really within our province. Teachers of literature have something to do that cannot be done by teachers of other subjects; and we have no business to poach upon the preserves of our colleagues. A great poem, rightly presented, is sure not only to give æsthetic pleasure, but to train the mind and the heart as well. In this connection it may not be amiss for one of his old students to acknowledge the help he has received from three essays by Professor W. P. Trent,—“Teaching the Spirit of Literature,” in *The Authority of Criticism*, and “The Aims and Methods of Literary Study” and “Teaching Literature,” in *Greatness in Literature*.

The length of the Introduction to this book, especially of the biographical part, can perhaps be justified by Byron's importance as a historic figure and by the intimate relations

subsisting between his life and his works. The criticism claims to be neither technical nor subtle, but attempts to deal rather in broad generalizations which may appeal to the young reader and yet not mislead him. In the introduction, the notes, and the critical comments I have tried to be accurate in matters of fact, and still to present both facts and opinions in a style that might awaken *interest*—without which all literary study is of course soulless and ineffective.

In the choice of selections for this volume *The Prisoner of Chillon* and *Mazeppa*, since they are among the college entrance requirements, were naturally the first consideration. Other poems, in whole or in part, have been included, either for study or for reading, that the book may perhaps be found useful in college classes also. Lack of space, the purpose of the volume, and, in some cases, objectionable matter in the poems themselves have excluded from this collection the dramas, the longer narrative poems, and the satires; but *Childe Harold* and *Don Juan* very well lend themselves to selection, and we find among Byron's poems many beautiful and appropriate lyrics.

It is hoped that the notes may be found sufficiently elaborate to pave the way to a full appreciation of the poems, without hampering the instructor or interfering with the student's self-activity. I was in such dread of over-editing, having several terrible examples before my eyes, that my first intention was to include nothing in the notes that could be found by the student in any ordinary work of reference. So rigorous a policy, however, seemed to be mistaken in view of the fact that in some cases such works of reference may not be readily accessible; hence the historical, geographical, and other annotations. Some of Byron's allusions are of doubtful significance, and in such instances I have expressed merely an opinion.

Acknowledgments are due to Mr. John Murray, of London, for his courteous permission to use his definitive text of Byron's poems, as edited by Mr. Coleridge and published in the twelve-volume edition of the prose and poetical works of Lord Byron, and in the one-volume edition of the poems, both of which editions are imported into this country by Messrs. Charles Scribner's Sons. The spelling of this text has, without exception, been preserved, even in its obvious inconsistencies. Certain changes in Byron's erratic punctuation, however, seemed absolutely necessary in the interests of clearness. It may be that the punctuation still remains somewhat inconsistent both with itself and with modern usage, but it is hoped that the poet's meaning will always be readily apparent. The obligation to Mr. Murray is profound, since the use of his Coleridge text, a monument of Byronic scholarship, greatly enhances the value of the present book. I am also indebted to my friend, Chief Justice Shackelford, of the Supreme Court of Florida, for suggestions as to the nature of the selections, and to my friend and colleague, Professor B. C. Bondurant, for valuable aid in many ways.

S. M. T.

TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA

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INTRODUCTION

GEORGE GORDON, LORD BYRON

Less than a century ago Byron shared with Napoleon the wonder of Europe. With the sole exception of Shakespeare, the author of *Childe Harold* and *Don Juan* is still to the foreign world by far the greatest figure in English poetry. His influence upon European literature has been almost incalculable. Perhaps never did a man's personality more deeply impress his generation; and Byron's poems are but a revelation of his personality,—complex, powerful, and brilliant. All this inevitably leads us to some consideration of the poet's life, character, and place in literature.

Byron, always something of a fighter and adventurer, sprang from an old and fighting stock. The Byrons, or Buruns, were Normans, who came over with the Conqueror, and are mentioned in his Domesday Book. They perhaps took part in the Crusades; certainly they fought at Crécy, and at Calais one of them was knighted. Various Sir Johns, Sir Richards, and Sir Nicholases continued the fighting tradition, and in 1643 one particular Sir John, a prominent Royalist, was created Baron of Rochdale for his services to the royal cause.

For us the chief interest in Byron's pedigree begins with 1722, in which year his great-uncle, the fifth lord, was born. "The wicked lord" "The wicked lord," as he came to be known, having murdered a relative, Mr. Chaworth, bore an unenviable reputation. He left the ancestral property in

a ruinous condition, and made the name of Byron a rather questionable heritage for his descendants. His brother, John
The seaman and traveler Byron, became a famous seaman and traveler, who wrote an entertaining autobiography, from which his illustrious grandson, the poet, gained material for some of his poetry.

The eldest son of this traveler and scaman, also named John Byron, the father of the poet, was born in 1751, and became a captain in the Guards. He was a dissipated, worthless fellow,
"Mad Jack" known as "Mad Jack," though his character seems to have been somewhat redeemed by a certain careless generosity and good nature. He eloped with the wife of the Marquis of Carmarthen, and married her after she had secured a divorce from her former husband. Of
Byron's birth this marriage was born Augusta, afterwards Mrs. Leigh, the poet's half-sister. This first wife died in 1784, and in the next year the fortune hunter entrapped a Scotch lady, Miss Catherine Gordon, of Gight, who was of an old family and possessed considerable estates. On January 22, 1788, the boy known as George Gordon Byron was born in Holles Street, London. Soon after this event, having squandered all of his wife's fortune, "Jack" Byron deserted his family, fled to France, and there died in 1791.

The boy George came into the world heavily handicapped. His father's race was a violent one; his mother's, foolish.

Character of Byron's mother Had Byron's mother been other than she was, the tenor of her son's life might have been more equable. But "Mrs. Byron," as the boy often called her, was a vain, impulsive woman, hysterical and passionate, and utterly capricious in her treatment of her son. She alternately abused and petted him; would berate him as a "lame brat" one instant, and caress him the next. So, although she was always ready to sacrifice herself for him,

and doubtless really loved him in her own way, their relations were in general most unfortunate. She was no mother for such a boy as Byron, — headstrong, passionate, moody, as he was. “Your mother’s a fool,” once remarked a fellow-schoolboy. “I know it,” was the startling and significant reply.

This was not all: Byron was lame. This lameness has been the subject of endless controversy; but it is now finally stated, and probably with truth, that he “was afflicted with an infantile paralysis which affected the muscles of the right leg and foot.” From this resulted a slight limp, never corrected, in spite of severe treatment. About this deformity, which was scarcely noticeable, Byron up to the very end of his life was abnormally sensitive. “What a pretty boy Byron is!” remarked a friend of his nurse; “what a pity he is lame!” Thereupon the boy, with flashing eyes, struck at her with his baby whip, exclaiming, “Dinna speak of it!” This abnormal sensitiveness undoubtedly colored his views of society and embittered his disposition.

Byron’s life now falls into five clearly defined periods, — his early school life up to and through his Harrow days; his university career; his two years’ stay in southern Europe; his London residence, marriage, and subsequent unpopularity; and his life abroad until his death, in 1824, at the age of thirty-six.

In 1790 Mrs. Byron took her son to Aberdeen and put him to school under various tutors. He showed himself a poor student, but read with avidity all the history and romance he could find. From 1794 to 1798 he attended the grammar school, during which period he was sent, in order to recuperate after an attack of scarlet fever, to Ballater. Here he wandered through the mountains and added to his passionate love of the sea, gained at Aberdeen, the love of mountain scenery that glorifies so much of his

verse. In 1794, through the death of a cousin, he became the next heir to the title, and in 1798 the death of "the wicked lord" made him, at the age of ten, the sixth Lord Byron.

After this event Mrs. Byron left at once for Newstead Abbey, the ancestral estate in Nottinghamshire. The desolation of

At Nottingham- the family home forced the two into residence at
ham Nottingham. Here young Byron was placed under the treatment of a quack named Lavender, who inflicted upon the boy unnecessary and fruitless torture, which he is said to have borne with remarkable fortitude. When his tutor referred to his suffering he replied, "Never mind, Mr. Rogers; you shall not see any sign of it in me." Within a year he was taken to London for treatment and put to school at Dulwich.

At Dulwich Here he was contented, and did well, according to the testimony of Dr. Glennie, the head master, who speaks of Byron's wide reading in history and poetry, and of his good humor while among his comrades.

In spite of all this, however, Mrs. Byron was not satisfied, and at her request her son was removed by his guardian,

Life at Harrow Lord Carlisle, to the great public school at Harrow. Here he remained until 1804, leading pretty much the ordinary schoolboy life—with a difference; for sometimes he went off by himself and dreamed. At this time the head master of Harrow was Dr. Drury, a famous teacher, who seems to have understood his eccentric yet gifted pupil, and for whom Byron always entertained an affectionate regard. "He was," Byron says, "the best, the kindest (and yet strict, too) friend I ever had; and I look on him still as a father, whose warnings I have remembered but too well, though too late, when I have erred, and whose counsel I have but followed when I have done well or wisely." Though he grew to love Harrow as the time approached for him to leave it, Byron at first hated the discipline of the school, and was

never an accurate scholar. But he was a great reader, and was fond of declaiming, at which he was remarkably good. In athletic sports, where he figured as a leader, swimming and rowing were his special favorites, for with these his lameness did not interfere. Fighting, it seems, was a pastime with him; and his physical prowess was often exercised in behalf of smaller and weaker boys, whom he characteristically regarded as the victims of tyranny. To one of these he once said, "Harness, if any one bullies you, tell me, and I'll thrash him if I can."

The warm friendships that were always to mark Byron's life existed even in his Harrow days. Among these friends were

Friends at Harrow	the Duke of Dorset, his favorite fag; Sir Robert Peel, afterwards the famous statesman; and Lord Clare. For the last named, Byron's affection was peculiarly romantic. Many years later, after contact with the world had somewhat embittered his disposition, his affection for Clare had suffered no change. As late as 1821 he said, "I never hear the name of Clare without a beating of the heart, even now." But none of these friends played any great part in his after life.
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More romantic than any friendship, and perhaps as lasting as any attachment Byron ever experienced, was his very real

Miss Chaworth	and ardent love for his cousin, Mary Ann Chaworth. The love was all on Byron's side, however, for the young lady was so far from returning the sentiment that she could rather unfeelingly refer to her young lover as "that lame boy," — a remark which Byron overheard and bitterly resented. Miss Chaworth married in 1805, and Byron never wholly recovered from this first disappointment. His powerful poem, <i>The Dream</i> , written in 1816, is merely a testimony to the strength and duration of the attachment.
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In 1805 Byron regretfully left Harrow for Trinity College, Cambridge. Here he took his M.A. degree three years later, apparently without really earning it; for his studies were

very erratically conducted, and he was absent from college during the entire year of 1807. Though Byron wished to go to Oxford, and so entered Cambridge in a bad temper, yet he made the most of his life there, from a social standpoint at least. For sports — cricket, shooting, boxing, and riding — he felt all his former fondness, and in them showed the same leadership as at Harrow. Again he became the center of a coterie of friends, — this time a brilliant set, some of whom were to influence his later life, and one or two of whom, such as Hobhouse and Hodgson, were to remain forever his ardent champions. Newstead Abbey had been let, and Byron spent his vacations in London, and with his mother at Southwell. The scenes that here took place between mother and son were surely such as never other poet experienced. At times Mrs. Byron seemed quite insane; and on one occasion both separately made visits to the local apothecary, each begging him not to sell poison to the other. Quarrels and reconciliations alternated, and deserve attention only because such unnatural relations could not fail to have their effect for the worse on Byron's disposition, and should perhaps mitigate our blame for certain features of his after life.

Poetry was an early passion with Byron, and in January, 1807, he privately printed his first volume, *Poems on Various Occasions*. This was followed in March by a second volume, printed at Newark, which he called *Hours of Idleness*. In this not very remarkable effort there was still some little promise of genius, but its main importance lies in the fact that it prompted the famous criticism written by Lord Brougham, and printed in *The Edinburgh Review* for January, 1808. The *Edinburgh's* onslaught was terrific. The inoffensive little volume of juvenile verse certainly did not deserve the sarcasm and abuse heaped upon it by the distinguished

Life at Cam-
bridge

Byron's rela-
tions with his
mother

"Hours of
Idleness"

critic ; but that was often the way of critics in those days. The review stung Byron to fury. He had long been an admirer of the poetry of Pope, and now deliberately planned an elaborate literary satire, after the model of *The Dunciad*, which should attack, and, as the author hoped, annihilate, not only the Scotch reviewers but the inoffensive English poets as well.

At Cambridge Byron indulged in all kinds of dissipation, which, in accord with his histrionic character, he had the bad taste to boast about. What he told about himself, little as his exploits redounded to his credit, was probably true, and he loved to parade it. Such was his tendency almost to the end of his life, until Missolonghi made him a hero. Newstead being now untenanted, he took up his residence there, surrounding himself with a wild and hilarious set, — Hobhouse, Matthews, Scrope Davies, and other Cambridge friends. High carnival reigned in the fine old Gothic building ; but to such revels it had, perhaps, long been accustomed. All sorts of absurd and outrageous practices were encouraged. The company dressed as monks and drank wine out of a human skull made into a drinking cup ; got up in the dead of night to practice pistol shooting ; and indulged in many other freaks of the same kind.

Byron loved animals, and surrounded himself now as always with a whole menagerie of pets, — dogs, monkeys, parrots, and bears. He once took a pet bear to college with him, and on being asked what he meant to do with it responded, to the indignation of the college authorities, “He shall sit for a fellowship.” To Boatswain, a Newfoundland dog, he was especially attached. When Boatswain died his master’s misanthropy, as well as his love for his pet, found expression in the famous epitaph,

To mark a friend’s remains these stones arise ;
I never knew but *one*, and *here* he lies, —

Life at New-
stead Abbey

Love of ani-
mals: Boat-
swain

a statement both untrue and affected, but not without some excuse. Such sentiments, if sincere, sprang naturally, even inevitably, from Byron's morbid outlook on life. He alternated between fits of hilarious mirth and moods of profound gloom. His satirical and clear-sighted friend, Scrope Davies, must have proved a wholesome antidote. "I shall go mad," the poet once exclaimed, in one of his despairing and passionate moods. "It is much more like silliness than madness," cuttingly remarked Davies.

Byron's coming of age in 1809 was, on account of lack of means, celebrated very quietly at Newstead; and after this event the young peer went up to London to take his seat in the House of Lords. When introduced, he appeared awkward and ill at ease. "I have taken my seat, and now I will go abroad," was his remark after the ceremony. In the same

month *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, the satire on which he had been working for a year, was given to the public. Its effect was immediate. The scathing sarcasm, often merciless and in the worst possible taste, fell alike on the just and on the unjust, on small and on great, even on such famous poets as Scott and Moore. It delighted the public, and forever established Byron's ability to fight his own battles, and the impossibility of attacking him with impunity. The lamb had shown himself a lion. But he soon became heartily ashamed of his boyish satire, and tried to withdraw it from circulation; while some of the poets he so unjustly attacked became afterwards his warmest friends.

The third epoch in Byron's life began in 1809, when he borrowed money and left England for an extended tour through southern Europe, accompanied by his friend Hobhouse and several servants. After visiting Portugal and Spain, he stopped at Sardinia and Malta, and spent the greater part

of two years wandering about Albania and Greece. He was entertained by the famous Albanian bandit and despot, Ali Pasha; visited Missolonghi, where some twelve years later he was to die; and spent several months at Athens, where he finished the first canto of *Childe Harold* and met the young

A tour through girl to whom he addressed his *Maid of Athens*. southern Eu- In March, 1810, he was at Smyrna. Here he com- rope; the pleted the second canto of *Childe Harold*, and "Maid of Ath- ens"

shortly after, in April of the same year, accomplished his famous feat of swimming across the Hellespont. Of this achievement Byron was inordinately proud, and he celebrated it both in his letters and in his poems. He took especial delight in the classical associations connected with this exhibition of his prowess and looked upon himself as a second Leander. For over a year he wandered about the adjacent country, visiting Constantinople, and incidentally gathering material for his Eastern romances. Some of his adventures were undoubtedly romantic enough for even his daring disposition, but they gathered around them the most absurd exaggerations, and to this day it is difficult to separate the truth from the falsehood. Whatever may have been the romantic side of this two years' wandering, the experience probably fostered the poet's personal interest in Greece, provided him with new literary material, and certainly greatly enlarged his knowledge of the world.

Tired of this sort of life, Byron finally returned to England by sea in July, 1811. He reached home to find trouble. Not

Return to
England;
death of
Byron's
mother

only were his finances in a desperate state, but his mother died on August 1, before he could reach her side. "I now feel the truth of Gray's obser-

vation, that we only can have one mother. Peace be with her," he said; and he spoke with sincerity, doubtless, for after all she was his mother, and had loved him.

Upon his return to England Byron entered on the fourth period of his life, — that of his extraordinary London career, his first literary fame, his marriage, and his subsequent unpopularity. At this period began his warm friendship with the famous Irish poet, Tom Moore, whom he had ridiculed in *Life in London*; Tom Moore; “Childe Harold” *English Bards*. The Irishman generously forgave the attack, and the two became the best of friends. Moore’s biography of his fellow-poet, *The Letters and Journals of Lord Byron*, is one of the most admirable books of its kind in existence, — discriminating, trustworthy, and sympathetic. Shortly after his return, Byron was asked by his relative, Dallas what poems he had brought back with him. The poet handed over to his friend an inferior satire which he had named *Hints from Horace*. Dallas, disappointed, asked, “Have you no other result of your travels?” To this Byron answered, “A few short pieces, and a lot of Spenserian stanzas; not worth troubling you with, but you are welcome to them.” These “Spenserian stanzas” of which their author thought so little were the first two cantos of *Childe Harold*, whose publication, in the spring of 1812, brought immediate and widespread popularity. “I awoke one morning and found myself famous,” said the poet. These first two cantos of *Childe Harold*, with their melancholy young hero, their declamatory rhetoric, and their commonplaces, were exactly on the level of their age, and suited the public taste to perfection. It may be doubted whether the two later and infinitely finer cantos, written several years afterwards, could possibly have created so tremendous a sensation.

Byron’s youth, personal beauty, rank, and genius now lifted him to the pinnacle of social favor. He posed as a mere literary dilettante, — a lord who amused himself by occasional ventures into literature, and aimed to discriminate sharply between professional writers, whom he affected to despise,

and men of rank who condescended to dabble in letters. This, however, was only a phase, and passed away as Byron grew to take his art more seriously. These were years of unalloyed social and literary triumphs; also, it must be confessed, of dissipation, and of poetic power expended upon unworthy achievements. But Byron's literary activity was remarkable. The success of his *Child Harold* stimulated him to further effort. His verse romances of Eastern life poured forth in astonishing profusion. Between May, 1813 and 1816, *The Giaour*, *The Bride of Abydos*, *The Corsair*, *Lara*, *The Siege of Corinth*, and *Parisina* were written and published. All are variations on one single theme, with but one hero under many disguises, and that hero Byron himself. Some of these tales were written in the meter that Scott had rendered popular, and, though inferior in many ways to *Marmion* and its companion pieces, quite eclipsed the fresher and more wholesome romances of the older poet. On the first day of its publication *The Corsair* sold ten thousand copies; and the total profits from all the tales amounted to several thousand pounds. But Byron wrote for love of writing, not for money, though he needed the latter badly enough; so with characteristic generosity he handed over the proceeds to his rather ungrateful relative, Dallas. *The Giaour* is perhaps the best of these tales, now little read and almost forgotten, which represent the literary fashion of a day, and to the taste of the present generation seem commonplace and crude. *Hebrew Melodies*, however, published early in 1815, contained some excellent lyrics, among others the matchless *She Walks in Beauty* and the favorite *Destruction of Sennacherib*.

Byron made several speeches in Parliament, and created a favorable impression. As a born orator and a vigorous protester

against what he considered oppression and tyranny, he might, perhaps, have become a great parliamentary figure ; but it is fortunate for literature that his energies were turned into other channels.

At this time Byron wore an air of rather pretentious melancholy, which probably was sincere enough, but of which he was entirely too conscious. Though not without some excuse for his despondency,—the death of his mother, the recent loss of several intimate friends, the constant sense of his lameness,—he was still a born actor, and happy only when in the lime-

light. The pose was popular and effective. In London, Byronic melancholy became the vogue.

Even the poet's very peculiarities of dress were imitated. Into this unwholesome atmosphere entered at least one refreshing influence. Augusta Leigh, Byron's half-sister, visited him in London in June, 1813. This visit strengthened their mutual affection, and the strong and beautiful bonds binding the brother and sister together were severed only by death.

Among all the great men whom the poet met in his London life, none impressed him more than Scott. The mighty "Wizard of the North," whose poetic star had been eclipsed by *Childe Harold*, extended to the younger poet a generous appreciation and sympathy that could not fail to conciliate even one so resentful as Byron of any air of patronage and condescension. The two met in London in the spring of 1815, and again in September of the same year. Of Byron,

Scott said : "What I liked about him, besides his boundless genius, was his generosity of spirit as well as of purse, and his utter contempt of all the affectations of literature. . . . He wrote from impulse, never from effort, and therefore I have always reckoned Burns and Byron the most genuine poetic geniuses of my time, and of half a century

before me. We have many men of high poetic talents, but none of that ever-gushing and perennial fountain of natural waters."

Byron felt that the time had come for him to marry; and he now, at the age of twenty-six, deliberately made his choice—or, rather, allowed it to be made for him. Anna Isabella Milbanke was pretty, clever, and accomplished. More than this, she was the daughter of Sir Ralph Milbanke, and an heiress. A marriage was finally arranged between the poet, who needed money, and the heiress, who appreciated fame and social position. The marriage, which took place on January 2, 1815, was bound to be unhappy, and so it proved.

Marriage to
Miss Mil-
banke; sepa-
ration

Lady Byron probably at first loved her husband, but loved herself more, and was quite intolerant of such irregularities as marked his social career; and Byron's character—impatient of restraint, self-centered, moody, passionate—was unintelligible to her. Only a year passed before Lady Byron, with her daughter Ada, one month old, left her husband forever. Her conduct has never been explained; and Byron, so garrulous about most of his private affairs, maintained on this one topic an almost complete silence. It is enough for us to know that their temperaments were incompatible. But the whole affair is so notorious, and bore so important a relation to the poet's after life, that it cannot be passed over without some mention.

The separation marked the reaction of favor against the darling of society. The British public, according to Macaulay, now entered upon "one of its periodical fits of morality." Byron had been overpraised; he was now to be heartily condemned. Though he was no worse than other men of the same set,

Unpopularity

his misdemeanors were retailed, and innumerable scandals about him were wholly invented. The small literary fry, who envied his success, joyously swarmed about to smirch his name; the newspapers attacked him

unsparingly and bitterly ; an unfortunate and tactless poem, which he wrote in an angry mood, added to the universal indignation. Byron was ostracized from society — was even hissed on the streets. He had before been famous ; he was now infamous. There was only one thing for him to do, — to leave England forever. Years later he wrote : “ The press was active and scurrilous. . . . My name — which had been a knightly or a noble one since my fathers helped to conquer the kingdom for William the Norman — was tainted. I felt that if what was whispered and muttered and murmured was true, I was unfit for England ; if false, England was unfit for me.”

So in April, 1816, he left his country, home, and friends.

Final de-
parture from
England

His finances were, as usual, in a tangle. Two years later Newstead had to be sold, and the proceeds — ninety thousand pounds — went mostly to pay off mortgages and debts. With this final departure from England began the fifth and last period of the poet's life.

Byron's exile opened a new and better era of his poetic activity. It revealed to him a new world, and it was a tonic to his energies. Without it he might never have proved so great a poet and so powerful a force in European literature. He sailed first for Ostend, and traveled through Belgium, visiting Brussels, where his imagination heard the “ sound of revelry by night,” and Waterloo, where his “ tread was on an empire's dust ” ; he went up the Rhine, his “ exulting and abounding river,” and thence to Basel, Bern, Lausanne, and Geneva. At the last-named city he met Shelley. Byron now came into intimate contact with a poet whose idealism profoundly attracted

Byron in
Switzerland ;
Shelley

him. Shelley taught him many things, and his influence is seen in several of Byron's productions, from the noble *Prometheus* to the more elaborate *Prisoner of Chillon*. Byron's attitude towards Shelley's poetry was not always favorable, — indeed, it is doubtful if he fully

appreciated the great genius of his friend; but his admiration for Shelley the man was unbounded, — “the best and least selfish man I ever knew,” he calls him. Shelley looked upon Byron as

The Pilgrim of Eternity, whose fame
Over his living head like heaven was bent,

but could scarcely sympathize with some of Byron's traits of character or habits of life. Nevertheless, the friendship between the two poets, whose names are so often linked together, continued until the end.

In September Byron journeyed through Switzerland, incidentally gathering material for his lyrical drama, *Manfred*, and for the later cantos of *Childe Harold*, in which the grandeur of the Alpine scenery plays so large a part. Already, in June, while detained by bad weather at a little village named Ouchy, near Lausanne, he had written *The Prisoner of Chillon*, a tribute to moral and political liberty, and a tremendous advance over his earlier romances in verse. About this time, too, he completed the third canto of *Childe Harold*. Switzerland had taught him her mighty lessons, and in October he crossed over into Italy, accompanied by his friend Hobhouse, the companion of his earlier wanderings. They journeyed first to Verona, then to Ferrara (which inspired *The Lament of Tasso*), to Florence, to Rome (“the Niobe of nations,” where he sat for his bust to the great Danish sculptor, Thorwaldsen), and finally to his Mecca, Venice, the “sea Cybele, fresh from ocean.” A'l through this tour the poet had been collecting material for some of his noblest productions; but for us the fairest flower of the Italian wandering is the fourth canto of *Childe Harold*, a glorification of Italy, which was finished in Venice in the early spring of 1818, about

“The Prisoner
of Chillon;”

“Childe
Harold” again

Tour through
Italy; “Man-
fred”

the same time with *Manfred*, a strange, mystical, dramatic poem bearing some general resemblance to Goethe's *Faust*.

The period of Byron's Venetian residence — extending through the greater part of two years — is one over which any lover of his fame would gladly draw a veil. Such a life of excesses of every kind was unworthy of a true man, much more so of a great poet. He wallowed in the mire, with results disastrous to his health, character, and reputation.

But, strangely enough, the period was one of intense literary activity. One elaborate poem "Mazeppa"; after another was turned out, with seemingly inexhaustible fertility, showing in the main a steady growth in art and in power. To this period belong *Beppe*, *Mazeppa*, and the earliest cantos of his masterpiece, *Don Juan*. In August, 1818, he was visited by Shelley, who records their walks and talks in his *Julian and Maddalo*. Tom Moore also came to see him while he was living in Venice, and in his famous biography gives many interesting details about his visit. As at Newstead, Byron had filled his house with animals, and "Keep clear of the dog," "Take care, or the monkey will fly at you," were among his reassuring cautions to Moore as the two felt their way up the stairs in the dark.

At this time, too, there came into Byron's life an influence which, though springing from an illegal relationship, brightened his existence and inspired his poetic genius. The Countess Guiccioli was the young and beautiful wife of an old Italian count. She was, furthermore, highly educated and attractive, with considerable depth of character and capacity for feeling. Byron and the countess met by chance; the attachment between the two was immediate and enduring. Henceforth she played a large part in the poet's life. They were together now and again at Venice, Bologna,

Ravenna, Pisa, and Genoa, — in fact, until Byron left Italy for Greece. Whatever we of the present day may think of the character of the relationship, and certainly that is beyond approbation, it is admitted that the Countess Guiccioli was a refining influence in Byron's life. She was a faithful friend, and we must remember, in estimating her character, that Italian society at this period was somewhat too tolerant of such relationships. Any biography of Byron, however brief, which should omit some mention of so important a factor, would be essentially incomplete.

After some two years at Venice, Byron removed to Bologna, and later to Ravenna. These changes of residence were dic-

tated by the movements of the countess, whose family, the Gambas, were ardent workers in the cause of Italian liberty. When one locality grew uncomfortable for them by reason of the suspicions of the dominant Austrian government, they went elsewhere and continued their operations afresh. At Ravenna Byron's literary activity continued unabated. Here he wrote his brilliant satire, *The Vision of Judgment*, and entered the lists as a dramatist with the Venetian plays, *Marino Faliero* and *The Two Foscari*, as well as with the more successful *Sardanapalus*. None of these, however, compares in power of imagination or in splendor of expression with the great dramatic poem, *Cain*, written at about the same time.

Byron had always been an ardent and probably sincere, though rather too declamatory, lover of liberty, both moral and political, and he had long been known to all Europe as "the poet of revolt." "I have simplified my politics into an utter detestation of all existing governments," he once said. His sympathy with the oppressed masses was rather condescending, but he was nevertheless quite ready to act upon his very positive convictions. Italy was secretly struggling for

Life at Ra-
venna; liter-
ary activity;
"Cain"

independence of the galling Austrian yoke. The conspirators were working largely through a society known as the Carbonari.

Byron's attitude toward Italian freedom Of this organization Byron's friends, the Gambas, were enthusiastic members. The author of the fourth canto of *Childe Harold* and of *The Prophecy of Dante*, which was intended for the Italians as a

vision of their independence, was naturally an object of suspicion to the Austrians. For this Byron did not care a straw, and he delighted to flaunt his revolutionary principles in the very faces of his foes. He moved about with the Gambas, however, and after consulting with Shelley, left Ravenna for Pisa in October, 1821. At this place Shelley had secured for his use the Lanfranchi palace, in which Byron lived and worked

Life at Pisa industriously for ten months, riding and shooting, for amusement, and entertaining his friends. Shelley was near by, at Lerici, on the Gulf of Spezia.

Long before this time Byron had become a great figure in the world's regard. The publication of one of his poems was an important literary event. From his work he derived a large income and could now afford to be independent. The tone of some of his later productions was such that his old London publisher, Murray, was unwilling to give them to the public. In order to control a medium for the circulation of his ideas and the publication of his poems, he conceived the

Leigh Hunt and "The Liberal" notion of founding a periodical of his own. Largely at Shelley's instigation, Leigh Hunt, the London radical and poet, was asked over to take charge of

the new venture, which was to be named *The Liberal*. In July, 1822, the Hunts — for the editor was accompanied by his wife and six children — appeared on the scene. Four numbers of *The Liberal* were published, the last in July, 1823. But the venture was a failure, mainly owing to the fact that, in the very nature of things, two such men as Hunt and Byron could

not agree. The Hunts were impecunious and improvident, and relied on Byron's bounty. Of this attitude the poet soon tired. The result was disruption and the financial failure of the paper.

Before *The Liberal* had ceased publication, however, and while Leigh Hunt was still at Byron's house, occurred a tragedy that plunged both men into mourning. In July, 1822, Shelley was drowned while sailing on the Gulf of Spezia. Byron was present at the cremation of the body, that weird and tragic event which has impressed itself so powerfully upon the imagination of mankind.

In the following September Byron removed to Genoa, his final place of residence in Italy. Here he finished the sixteenth canto of *Don Juan*, still leaving the poem incomplete. This was his last work of any note. He now stood on the very pinnacle of poetic fame. He had proved his power as a lyrist, written one of the greatest of descriptive poems, accomplished something in the drama, and as narrative poet and satirist reigned supreme. Nothing, apparently, remained to be achieved in the realm of poetry. He was growing tired of it all, even of the applause and adulation that once were as music in his ears. Pleasure palled on him; dissipation had left its inevitable and ugly mark upon his health and his noble personal beauty. He wanted new worlds to conquer, and soon came the opportunity. Greece was in the midst of a desperate struggle for independence of Turkey. Beset with foes without and within, she was in dire straits for

Genoa; "*Don Juan*" and satirist reigned supreme. Nothing, apparently, remained to be achieved in the realm of poetry. He was growing tired of it all, even of the applause and adulation that once were as music in his ears. Pleasure palled on him; dissipation had left its inevitable and ugly mark upon his health and his noble personal beauty. He wanted new worlds to conquer, and soon came the opportunity. Greece was in the midst of a desperate struggle for independence of Turkey. Beset with foes without and within, she was in dire straits for want of money and competent leadership. In England a "Greek Committee" of prominent men had been formed to promote the cause of Grecian independence. This committee felt the need of adding to their number some great name of powerful influence among the Greeks themselves. In April, 1823, Byron was elected to membership. After a creditable hesitation he

Grecian liberty: a new interest

accepted, and offered money and counsel. Tired of inaction, dissatisfied with his former achievements, longing for new renown, and genuinely sympathizing with the Greeks, he threw himself into the cause with all his wonderful ardor and

energy. On July 14, 1823, he sailed for Greece on the brig *Hercules*, which he had purchased and loaded with stores and arms. And now opens the last and by far the most creditable act in the complicated drama of the poet's life.

In August Byron reached his destination, Cephalaria, and there remained until the end of the year, awaiting instructions. With this period is connected an interesting and amusing experience that throws a peculiar side light upon certain aspects of the poet's character. Dr. Kennedy, a Scotch physician and a warm Presbyterian, was conducting a

series of religious meetings at the neighboring town of Argostoli. Byron, always a curious though sometimes a scoffing inquirer, had from the beginning been interested in religion. Without any

really justifiable basis, he had been looked upon in England, especially since the publication of *Cain*, as an utter atheist. Fond of religious disputation, and arguing acutely yet good-humoredly upon religious subjects, he invariably represented himself as a seeker after light. After attending Dr. Kennedy's meetings he grew to know and admire the sincerely good man, and there ensued between the two a series of elaborate theological discussions in which the poet seems to have had the best of it, though up to the end the good doctor was still hoping to bring his brilliant opponent to see the error of his ways. But Byron can scarcely with justice be called a scoffer at religion. His fundamental attitude toward such matters is rather that of a skeptical yet really earnest seeker after the actual truth as apart from superstition and sham.

Finally, in December, Byron went to the stronghold of Missolonghi to join the Greek leader, Prince Mavrocordatos. He brought with him four thousand pounds of his personal loan and the magic of his presence. Daring and resourceful as he was, the situation that confronted him was enough to tax even his energy, sympathy, and clear judgment. But Byron had never shown himself in his true colors until confronted with a situation that called for all the qualities of a hero.

**Missolonghi ;
Byron as gen-
eral and
statesman** Everywhere about him was discord, intrigue, mismanagement, and disorder. In all this he showed himself a general and a statesman. At his touch unity sprang from discord, and order from confusion. Ships were built, fortifications repaired, troops organized and drilled. His resourcefulness and self-command were instant and un-failing. The Greeks recognized his ability by appointing him to lead the important military expedition against the Turkish stronghold, Lepanto ; but, in spite of his eagerness to be in the actual conflict, this attack never took place. For all his courage, Byron never had a chance to fight.

On January 22, 1824, in the midst of confusion and alarms, he wrote his last poem of any note, the lines on his thirty-sixth birthday. They breathe the new and nobler spirit that was now animating his life :

The sword, the banner, and the field,
Glory and Greece, around me see !
The Spartan, borne upon his shield,
Was not more free.

Pleasure, ease, luxury, self-contentment, even poetry, had been left behind forever. The hero had replaced the man of the world ; the soldier, the poet. About this time came the beginning of the end. Byron's health, undermined by wrong living and by the extremely ascetic regimen he insisted upon

following, began to give way under the strain. Missolonghi was a fever-stricken place, which his friends were continually beseeching him to leave. But he stuck to his post, though beset by sickness and burdened with heavy cares. When preparing for the attack against Lepanto, the Suliotes, forming a contingent of the Greek troops, revolted. This threw Byron into a convulsive attack, from which he had not recovered when the mutinous soldiers actually broke into his sick room, demanding redress. His courage and control of the situation, under these terrible circumstances, is said to have been sublime.

Byron's will conquered. He rallied in health for a time, and displayed much of his former vivacity. On March 30 he was presented with the freedom of the city of Missolonghi. But the end was not far off. On April 9 he rode out, was drenched with rain, yet insisted upon returning home in a boat. He was soon seized with a rheumatic fever, and all the efforts of his physicians proved unavailing. In his delirium he fancied himself leading the attack against Lepanto, crying, "Forwards! forwards! follow me!" We cannot fail to recall the deathbed of "the great emperor who with the great poet divided the wonder of Europe." He mentioned Lady Byron, Augusta his sister, Ada his daughter; and on April 19, with "Now I shall go to sleep," he died.

Byron's death, to the Greeks, came in the nature of a national calamity. Greece was plunged into mourning. She had lost a brilliant and heroic champion, the one man above all others on whom her hopes were fixed. "England has lost her brightest genius, Greece her noblest friend," wrote Colonel Stanhope, another distinguished worker for Grecian freedom. The remains of the poet were sent to England and arrived there in May. Interment in Westminster

The begin-
ning of the end

Byron's ill-
ness and
death

Interment at
Hucknall

Abbey was refused, and Byron was laid to rest on July 16, 1824, beside his mother and his ancestors, in the village churchyard of Hucknall.

Byron's personality and character have furnished food for almost endless discussion. All who knew him agreed as to his wonderful personal beauty and attractiveness. Scott said he had "a countenance to dream of," and an irresistible charm of address. His head was small, and covered with light-brown curls; his complexion, colorless; his eyes, light gray; his mouth, perfectly molded. Various portraits agree in giving him a high forehead, regularity of features, and an expression of brilliant intelligence. **Personal appearance; character** His manner with his intimates was genial and delightful, though not always equable; his love of fun was almost superabundant, manifesting itself in flashes between fits of melancholy and depression. To the latter his lameness and his early environment, as well as his irregular habits, may have largely contributed. Child of his strange race as he was, Byron was also the victim of unfortunate circumstances. This should never be forgotten when we are estimating his wonderfully complex and paradoxical traits of character.

What were those traits, forming the personality that so powerfully impressed itself upon a whole continent? On the one side, absurd vanity, often displayed in many unworthy little ways; habitual arrogance and pride of rank; an uncertain temper, impulsive, even violent, running into extravagant fits of passion; a tendency towards self-indulgence that led him, genius and poet though he was, into criminal excesses. **Byron's unattractive side**

On the other and better side we find dauntless physical courage, and moral courage even more splendid than the physical; a remarkable fondness for small, defenseless creatures of all kinds; a warm heart for his friends and lasting fidelity and

attachment to the few who befriended and believed in him; princely generosity of heart and purse; but, even above all this, the two supreme traits that make the man's **His finer qualities** poetry so great and enduring, — an intense and consuming hatred of hypocrisy and sham in every phase of life, and just as sincere and ardent a love of every kind of liberty.

Underneath all this superficial contradiction lay a will of iron and a capacity for genuine self-sacrifice and heroism that rose to actual greatness when occasion demanded, as at Missolonghi. Byron was not a good man, but his character so colors and molds his poetry as to render it inevitable that we should know something of his extraordinary personality. Compound of gold and clay that he was, his often sordid and unworthy **A final estimate** life was fairly redeemed by his heroic death, and so we may still apply to him at least a part of Dr. Johnson's beautiful tribute to his friend Goldsmith, — "Enough of his failings; he was a very great man."

Farewell, thou Titan fairer than the gods!
 Farewell, farewell, thou swift and lovely spirit,
 Thou splendid warrior with the world at odds,
 Unpraised, unpraisable beyond thy merit;
 Chased, like Orestes, by the furies' rods,
 Like him at length thy peace dost thou inherit;
 Beholding whom, men think how fairer far
 Than all the steadfast stars the wandering star!

ANDREW LANG, in *Letters to Dead Authors*

BYRON AS A POET

For almost a century Byron's place as a poet has been the theme of constant dispute. Was he truly a great poet, or merely a retailer of cheap commonplaces clothed in pretentious rhetoric? The distinguished English critic, Professor Saintsbury, says: "Byron seems to me a poet distinctly of

the second class, and not even of the best kind of second. . . . His verse is to the greatest poetry what melodrama is to tragedy, what plaster is to marble, what pinchbeck is to gold" (*A History of Nineteenth Century Literature*, p. 80).

But Mr. Matthew Arnold, perhaps the most famous of all English literary critics, himself a great poet, says, on the contrary: "Wordsworth and Byron stand, it seems to me, first and preëminent in actual performance, a glorious pair, among the English poets of this century. . . . When the year 1900 is turned, and our nation comes to recount her poetic glories in the century which has then just ended, the first names with her will be these" (*Essay on Byron*).

Which shall we follow? or shall we rather find a safer point of view between these two extremes?

Byron was born in the midst of an era of revolution. Five years before his birth the American colonies had gained their independence. One year after his birth the French Revolution began. For the fifty years following that terrible social cataclysm the progress of liberal ideas was widespread and rapid. All Europe felt the new impulse toward national independence and personal liberty, toward free thought, free speech, and democracy. Byron saw Napoleon's rise to supreme

An age of revolution power, his victories at Austerlitz, Marengo, Jena, and Wagram; his retreat from Moscow, and his final overthrow at Waterloo. He saw old institutions, beliefs, and customs summoned before the bar of reason and overthrown almost in a day. He felt the powerful impulse toward new thought in politics, literature, and religion. He saw a common revolutionary sentiment make Liberty, Democracy, Reason, Revolution, the watchwords in almost every country of Europe.

Byron and Shelley, far beyond all other English poets, were the children of this new thought. They were indeed "poets

of revolt," not only abreast of the new movements in every sphere of activity, but even ahead of them. While Wordsworth was quietly communing with Nature in his Westmoreland hills ; while Coleridge was dreaming about the supernatural, and Keats was worshipping Beauty, apart from the crowd, — Byron and Shelley, the apostles of revolution, were living and working in a world of men. Byron's poems, from first to last, ring with vigorous protests against "tyranny," eloquent praise of "liberty," national and personal, and bitter denunciation of oppression, superstition, and worn-out customs. In the main, the protest and the praise are real and sincere ; almost always they are eloquent ; often they are splendid. If *Cain* is a voice crying out for rationalism in religion, *Childe Harold* is one long, fervent tribute to liberty and democracy, and *Don Juan* is one superb protest against superstition and sham.

The reforms that Byron advocated, the ideas that he set forth through the entire range of his poems, were not fully to reach their fruition until almost a generation after his death, in the revolutions of 1848 ; but even during his lifetime he was to such an extent the voice of his revolutionary age that his name became to Europe at large the synonym of progress and revolt. The energy and power with which he set forth his opinions, and the pomp and circumstance with which he gathered up and interpreted the thought and emotion of a continent, dazzled the public and made it captive to the splendid sweep and eloquence of his verse. This was his unique triumph while he lived, and it has since proved almost his undoing. That Byron was a great historic figure cannot be gainsaid ; but what remains, now that the reforms he so ardently advocated have long since become established facts, and the daring ideas he advanced have long been platitudes?

The "poets
of revolt"

Byron's con-
temporary
fame

Byron's fascinating personality also had its effect on his immense contemporary fame ; but the time has passed

When thousands counted every groan,
And Europe made his woe her own.

The spell that enchanted Europe has dissolved ; yet something more substantial still remains to be considered.

Byron, as we have seen, even now figures to the continent as the greatest English poet next to Shakespeare. His works have been translated into every important foreign language. No less a poet and critic than Goethe has pronounced him "the greatest genius of the century." Castelar, the Spaniard ; Sainte-Beuve and Taine, the Frenchmen ; Elze, the German ;

His influence upon European literature Mazzini, the Italian, who said, "Byron led the genius of Britain on a pilgrimage throughout all Europe," — all bear witness to his tremendous influence and universal popularity. So unanimous a verdict should make us pause, and lead us to examine the evidence on which it is founded.

Byron's literary activity was phenomenal. Within eighteen years he wrote, as Mr. Coleridge reminds us, two epics or quasi-epics, twelve tales, eight dramas, seven or eight satires,

Byron's versatility; lack of dramatic talent and of architectonic faculty and a multitude of occasional poems, lyrics, and epigrams. This is the sum of his achievement, — a versatile one. Though his play *Werner* for a time held the stage, as a dramatic poet he is virtually a failure. A dramatist must possess the gift

of objective characterization. In this Byron was singularly lacking. So self-centered a poet could create no real figures apart from himself. "He made the men after his own image ; the women, after his own heart." Another fatal defect is Byron's lack of what is called "the architectonic faculty," — the ability to plan and construct a harmonious and complete

whole. *Childe Harold* is but a series of short poems; even *Don Juan* is little more. Rendered a unit by the poet's personality only, Byron's masterpiece fascinates the mature reader not through the adventures of its hero, but through the poet's own comments and reflections, and through interspersed lyric passages of singular beauty and power.

This same failure in dramatic characterization follows us through all of Byron's earlier narrative poems. His elaborate Eastern tales, while they show narrative *verve*, and contain admirable passages, have long since lost their pristine savor. The two narrative poems which still live as wholes, and must live indefinitely it would now seem, are *The Prisoner of Chillon* and *Mazeppa*, which are thoroughly true and sincere.

Byron's place as a lyric poet is still in dispute. Certainly his really fine lyrics are few in number, but the author of *She Walks in Beauty*, *Stanzas to Augusta*, *On this Day I complete my Thirty-sixth Year*, cannot be refused recognition as a lyrist.

That Byron is not a supreme lyric poet is due rather to lack of effort than to lack of power. The autobiographic character of his best lyrics, laying bare to the whole earth, utterly and some would say shamelessly, the poet's inmost emotions, is redeemed by the powerful and complex personality inspiring them and giving them interest and value.

Childe Harold is beyond doubt a great contribution to descriptive and reflective poetry; and here Byron approaches that climax of his power to be fully attained only in *Don Juan*.

As a satirist Byron is quite supreme among English poets. Here we need not qualify our praise. Satire in the hands of this master is no longer sordid and realistic; it is transfigured into something highly imaginative and ideal. Acute criticism of life, extensive knowledge of human nature, the most abounding and

inexhaustible energy, — all this abides in Byron's masterpiece, his chief claim to immortality.

What is Byron's place among the world poets, the supreme few? Homer, Æschylus, Sophocles, Dante, Shakespeare, Milton, Goethe, perhaps one or two others, were poets of the highest architectonic power, and of unfailing art. Above all

Byron's place among the world poets this, their great works show a "high seriousness" and a noble and consistent outlook on life.

Among these poets of the first order it is doubtful if Byron can with any justice be ranked. Though *Don Juan* is an elaborate work of highly sustained art, it is deficient in characterization, in organism, and in a serious and consistent point of view. Thus, superb as it is, it yet can scarcely be placed among the world's supreme masterpieces of poetry.

We must, then, compare Byron with the poets of the second order, and, naturally, with those of England. Even here, as we have seen, reigns a variety of opinion. As a close and accurate student of nature and a portrayer of her more intimate and peculiar beauties, Byron cannot compare with Wordsworth. Neither has he the power to take a seem-

Byron as compared with his English contemporaries and successors ingly commonplace or prosaic subject and lift it into poetry by the magic of his treatment, as do Wordsworth and Arnold. He has nothing of the

haunting magic and rich melodies of Coleridge; the delicacy, the sensuous beauty, as well as the perfect expression, of Keats, are utterly beyond him. With Shelley, as a lyric poet and a master of music, he cannot for an instant be compared. Tennyson is an infinitely finer and more careful artist. Byron is lacking in the sound knowledge of life, the wide scholarship, the profound insight into the human soul, that render Browning so potent a force in poetry. What, then, remains?

The answer is easily found. Any one who reads the few selections in the present volume cannot fail to be impressed with the one trait that, above everything else, marks them as a whole, — their fire, their vigor, their “exulting and abounding” energy. In this Byron takes his place second only to Shakespeare. Energy and strength are no small poetical assets. Byron is the greatest singer of the mountains and the sea. The Apostrophe to the Ocean, the stanzas on the Alps, the Rhine, the Marble Cascade, in the energy and sweep of their splendid verse, are worthy of their theme. Byron, too, can make the dead past live again as can no other poet: he finds out the poetry in history and quickens it to life. We are swept along with him in the impetuous torrent of his verse, and inspired by the poet’s own emotion.

It is idle to say that Byron is only too often a faulty artist, careless, sometimes even uncouth. He does not belong to the order of the poets of art. He worked on a large scale, — painted on an immense canvas in vivid colors. To assert, furthermore, that Byron says only the thing that is obvious, is instantly to provoke the answer that he says that thing as no other could, and glorifies it while saying it. He is perhaps not a profoundly original thinker, yet he expressed, interpreted, and applied the thought of a whole continent. A definite philosophy of life and coherent teaching he never attempted, but he voiced universal hopes and aspirations in spirited and inspiring verse. His faults of technic, even his frequent lapses from good taste, are forgotten in his actual greatness. After reading all of his work, — unequal, disappointing, crude, as much of it is, — we must finally say, with Mr. Swinburne, that “his is the splendid and imperishable excellence of sincerity and strength.”

Some permanent qualities of Byron’s poetry

Byron not an art poet

His essential greatness: sincerity and strength

REFERENCES

The standard, and apparently definitive, edition of the complete works of Lord Byron is that published by Mr. John Murray of London. In this edition the prose works, in six volumes, are edited by Mr. R. W. Prothero; and the poetical works, in seven volumes, are edited by Mr. Ernest Hartley Coleridge. A one-volume edition, *The Poetical Works of Lord Byron*, is also published by Mr. John Murray, with introduction and notes by Mr. Coleridge. Both editions are imported into this country by Messrs. Charles Scribner's Sons. For ordinary purposes the one-volume edition is superior to any other and can hardly be superseded.

For a further study of Byron and his poems the student will find the following critical and biographical books and articles helpful and interesting:

BYRON, by John Nichol, in the English Men of Letters Series.

ESSAY ON MOORE'S LIFE OF LORD BYRON, Macaulay.

BYRON, by Matthew Arnold, in *Essays in Criticism*, Second Series.

THE BYRON REVIVAL, by W. P. Trent, in *The Authority of Criticism*.

BYRON, by Theodore Watts-Dunton, in the revised edition of Chambers's Encyclopedia of English Literature.

Needless to say, the bibliography of Byron is almost endless. It is not so easy, however, to find estimates of his genius which err neither on the side of undue depreciation nor on that of excessive praise. There is only one way by which to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion,—and that is by a thorough and careful reading of Byron's works.

SELECTIONS FROM BYRON

LACHIN Y GAIR

This poem was first printed in *Hours of Idleness*, 1807. It is probably the best of Byron's juvenile poems.

"Lachin y Gair, or, as it is pronounced in the Erse, *Loch na Garr*, towers proudly preëminent in the northern Highlands, near Invercauld. One of our modern tourists mentions it as the highest mountain, perhaps, in Great Britain. Be this as it may, it is certainly one of the most sublime and picturesque amongst our 'Caledonian Alps.' Its appearance is of a dusky hue, but the summit is the seat of eternal snows. Near Lachin y Gair I spent some of the early part of my life, the recollection of which has given birth to these stanzas."—*Byron's note*

I

AWAY, ye gay landscapes, ye gardens of roses !
In you let the minions of luxury rove ;
Restore me the rocks, where the snow-flake reposes,
Though still they are sacred to freedom and love :
Yet, Caledonia, belov'd are thy mountains,
Round their white summits though elements war ;
Though cataracts foam 'stead of smooth-flowing fountains,
I sigh for the valley of dark Loch na Garr.

II

Ah ! there my young footsteps in infancy wander'd :
My cap was the bonnet, my cloak was the plaid ;
On chieftains, long perish'd, my memory ponder'd,
As daily I strode through the pine-cover'd glade ;

I sought not my home till the day's dying glory
 Gave place to the rays of the bright polar star ;
 For fancy was cheer'd by traditional story,
 Disclos'd by the natives of dark Loch na Garr.

III

"Shades of the dead ! have I not heard your voices
 Rise on the night-rolling breath of the gale ?"
 Surely, the soul of the hero rejoices,
 And rides on the wind, o'er his own Highland vale !
 Round Loch na Garr, while the stormy mist gathers,
 Winter presides in his cold icy car :
 Clouds there encircle the forms of my Fathers ;¹
 They dwell in the tempests of dark Loch na Garr.

IV

"Ill starr'd, though brave, did no visions foreboding
 Tell you that fate had forsaken your cause ?"
 Ah ! were you destin'd to die at Culloden,²
 Victory crown'd not your fall with applause :
 Still were you happy : in Death's earthy slumber
 You rest with your clan in the caves of Braemar ;
 The Pibroch³ resounds, to the piper's loud number,
 Your deeds, on the echoes of dark Loch na Garr.

V

Years have roll'd on, Loch na Garr, since I left you,
 Years must elapse ere I tread you again :
 Nature of verdure and flowers has bereft you,
 Yet still are you dearer than Albion's plain :

¹ Many of Byron's maternal ancestors, the Gordons, fought for the Stuart Pretender, Prince Charles.

² Culloden : the battle that put an end to the hopes of the House of Stuart. It was fought near Inverness, Scotland, April 16, 1746.

³ Pibroch : the martial music played on the bagpipe, but in this instance Byron probably refers to the instrument itself.

England ! thy beauties are tame and domestic,
 To one who has rov'd on the mountains afar :
 Oh ! for the crags that are wild and majestic,
 The steep, frowning glories of dark Loch na Garr.

MAID OF ATHENS, ERE WE PART

Ζωή μου, σὰς ἀγαπῶ

This, perhaps the most popular of Byron's lyrics, was written at Athens in 1810, and addressed to a young girl, Theresa Macri, daughter of Byron's landlady, the widow of a former English vice consul. The Greek refrain means "My life, I love you."

I

MAID of Athens, ere we part,
 Give, oh give me back my heart !
 Or, since that has left my breast,
 Keep it now, and take the rest !
 Hear my vow before I go,
Ζωή μου, σὰς ἀγαπῶ.

II

By those tresses unconfined,
 Wooed by each Ægean wind ;
 By those lids whose jetty fringe
 Kiss thy soft cheeks' blooming tinge ;
 By those wild eyes like the roe,
Ζωή μου, σὰς ἀγαπῶ.

III

By that lip I long to taste ;
 By that zone-encircled waist ;

By all the token-flowers that tell
 What words can never speak so well ;
 By Love's alternate joy and woe,
Ζωή μου, σὰς ἀγαπῶ.

IV

Maid of Athens ! I am gone :
 Think of me, sweet ! when alone.
 Though I fly to Istambol,¹
 Athens holds my heart and soul :
 Can I cease to love thee ? No !
Ζωή μου, σὰς ἀγαπῶ.

MODERN GREECE

(From *The Giaour*)

HE who hath bent him o'er the dead
 Ere the first day of Death is fled,
 The first dark day of Nothingness,
 The last of Danger and Distress,
 (Before Decay's effacing fingers
 Have swept the lines where Beauty lingers,)
 And marked the mild angelic air,
 The rapture of Repose that's there,
 The fixed yet tender traits that streak
 The languor of the placid cheek,
 And — but for that sad shrouded eye,
 That fires not, wins not, weeps not, now,
 And but for that chill, changeless brow,
 Where cold Obstruction's apathy
 Appals the gazing mourner's heart,
 As if to him it could impart

¹ Istambol : Constantinople.

The doom he dreads, yet dwells upon ;
 Yes, but for these and these alone,
 Some moments, aye, one treacherous hour,
 He still might doubt the Tyrant's power ; 20
 So fair, so calm, so softly sealed,
 The first, last look by Death revealed !
 Such is the aspect of this shore :
 'T is Greece, but living Greece no more !
 So coldly sweet, so deadly fair,
 We start, for Soul is wanting there.
 Hers is the loveliness in death,
 That parts not quite with parting breath ;
 But beauty with that fearful bloom,
 That hue which haunts it to the tomb, 30
 Expression's last receding ray,
 A gilded Halo hovering round decay,
 The farewell beam of Feeling past away !
 Spark of that flame, perchance of heavenly birth,
 Which gleams, but warms no more its cherished earth !

KNOW YE THE LAND?

This introduction to *The Bride of Abydos*, written in 1813, was perhaps suggested by the opening lines of Goethe's *Mignon* :

" Kennst du das Land wo die Citronen blühn ? "

KNOW ye the land where the cypress and myrtle
 Are emblems of deeds that are done in their clime ?
 Where the rage of the vulture, the love of the turtle,
 Now melt into sorrow, now madden to crime ?
 Know ye the land of the cedar and vine,
 Where the flowers ever blossom, the beams ever shine ;

Where the light wings of Zephyr, oppressed with perfume,
 Wax faint o'er the gardens of Gúl¹ in her bloom ;
 Where the citron and olive are fairest of fruit,
 And the voice of the nightingale never is mute ;
 Where the tints of the earth, and the hues of the sky,
 In colour though varied, in beauty may vie,
 And the purple of Ocean is deepest in dye ;
 Where the virgins are soft as the roses they twine,
 And all, save the spirit of man, is divine —
 'Tis the clime of the East — 't is the land of the Sun —
 Can he smile on such deeds as his children have done?
 Oh ! wild as the accents of lovers' farewell
 Are the hearts which they bear and the tales which they tell.

SHE WALKS IN BEAUTY

(From *Hebrew Melodies*)

Byron, at the request of a friend, wrote a number of lyrics to be set to music. In April, 1815, these were published, with the music, under the title of *Selections of Hebrew Melodies*. Though the poet was, or pretended to be, ashamed of the volume, at least five of its twenty-three poems have achieved immortality. Only fifteen are on Biblical themes; and the first in order, *She Walks in Beauty*, has for its subject Anne Horton, who married Byron's cousin, Robert Wilmot. This is perhaps Byron's most finished lyric poem, though written long before his poetic power reached its climax.

I

SHE walks in Beauty, like the night
 Of cloudless climes and starry skies ;
 And all that's best of dark and bright
 Meet in her aspect and her eyes :
 Thus mellowed to that tender light
 Which Heaven to gaudy day denies.

¹ Gúl : the rose.

II

One shade the more, one ray the less,
 Had half impaired the nameless grace
 Which waves in every raven tress,
 Or softly lightens o'er her face ;
 Where thoughts serenely sweet express
 How pure, how dear their dwelling-place.

III

And on that cheek, and o'er that brow,
 So soft, so calm, yet eloquent,
 The smiles that win, the tints that glow,
 But tell of days in goodness spent,
 A mind at peace with all below,
 A heart whose love is innocent !

SONG OF SAUL BEFORE HIS LAST BATTLE

The death of Saul is related in 1 Samuel xxxi ; though Byron's *Song* is of course purely imaginary.

I

WARRIORS and Chiefs ! should the shaft or the sword
 Pierce me in leading the host of the Lord,
 Heed not the corse, though a King's, in your path :
 Bury your steel in the bosoms of Gath !

II

Thou who art bearing my buckler and bow,
 Should the soldiers of Saul look away from the foe,
 Stretch me that moment in blood at thy feet !
 Mine be the doom which they dared not to meet.

III

Farewell to others, but never we part,
 Heir to my Royalty — Son of my heart !
 Bright is the diadem, boundless the sway,
 Or kingly the death, which awaits us to-day !¹

VISION OF BELSHAZZAR

The *Vision of Belshazzar* is based upon Daniel v.

I

THE King was on his throne,
 The Satraps thronged the hall :
 A thousand bright lamps shone
 O'er that high festival.
 A thousand cups of gold,
 In Judah deemed divine —
 Jehovah's vessels hold
 The godless Heathen's wine !

II

In that same hour and hall,
 The fingers of a hand
 Came forth against the wall,
 And wrote as if on sand :
 The fingers of a man ; —
 A solitary hand
 Along the letters ran,
 And traced them like a wand.

¹ In this last stanza Saul addresses Jonathan.

III

The monarch saw, and shook,
And bade no more rejoice ;
All bloodless waxed his look,
And tremulous his voice.
“ Let the men of lore appear,
The wisest of the earth,
And expound the words of fear,
Which mar our royal mirth.”

IV

Chaldea's seers are good,
But here they have no skill ;
And the unknown letters stood
Untold and awful still.
And Babel's men of age
Are wise and deep in lore ;
But now they were not sage,
They saw — but knew no more.

V

A captive in the land,
A stranger and a youth,
He heard the King's command,
He saw that writing's truth.
The lamps around were bright,
The prophecy in view ;
He read it on that night, —
The morrow proved it true.

VI

“ Belshazzar's grave is made,
His kingdom passed away,

He, in the balance weighed,
Is light and worthless clay ;
The shroud, his robe of state,
His canopy the stone ;
The Mede is at his gate !
The Persian on his throne !”

THE DESTRUCTION OF SENNACHERIB

See 2 Kings xviii and xix for the historical incident.

I

THE Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold,
And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold ;
And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea,
When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee.

II

Like the leaves of the forest when Summer is green,
That host with their banners at sunset were seen :
Like the leaves of the forest when Autumn hath blown,
That host on the morrow lay withered and strown.

III

For the angel of Death spread his wings on the blast,
And breathed in the face of the foe as he passed ;
And the eyes of the sleepers waxed deadly and chill,
And their hearts but once heaved — and forever grew still !

IV

And there lay the steed with his nostril all wide,
But through it there rolled not the breath of his pride ;
And the foam of his gasping lay white on the turf,
And cold as the spray of the rock-beating surf.

V

And there lay the rider distorted and pale,
 With the dew on his brow, and the rust on his mail :
 And the tents were all silent — the banners alone —
 The lances unlifted — the trumpet unblown.

VI

And the widows of Ashur¹ are loud in their wail,
 And the idols are broke in the temple of Baal ;
 And the might of the Gentile, unsmote by the sword,
 Hath melted like snow in the glance of the Lord !

STANZAS FOR MUSIC

THERE'S NOT A JOY THE WORLD CAN GIVE

O Lachrymarum fons, tenero sacros
 Ducentium ortus ex animo: quater
 Felix! in imo qui scatentem
 Pectore te, pia Nympha, sensit.

— GRAY'S *Poemata*

These stanzas were written on hearing of the death of the Duke of Dorset, who was killed by a fall from his horse while hunting, in March, 1815. Dorset had been among Byron's warmest friends at Harrow.

"Do you remember the lines I sent you early last year? . . . I mean those beginning, 'There's not a joy the world can give,' etc., on which I pique myself as being the *truest*, though the most melancholy, I ever wrote." — *Byron's letter to Moore, March, 1816*

I

THERE'S not a joy the world can give like that it takes
 away,

When the glow of early thought declines in Feeling's dull decay ;
 'Tis not on Youth's smooth cheek the blush alone, which fades
 so fast,

But the tender bloom of heart is gone, ere Youth itself be past.

¹ Ashur : the highest god of the Assyrians ; but the word here stands for the country of Assyria itself.

II

Then the few whose spirits float above the wreck of happiness
Are driven o'er the shoals of guilt or ocean of excess :
The magnet of their course is gone, or only points in vain
The shore to which their shivered sail shall never stretch again.

III

Then the mortal coldness of the soul like Death itself comes
down ;
It cannot feel for others' woes, it dare not dream its own ;
That heavy chill has frozen o'er the fountain of our tears,
And though the eye may sparkle still, 't is where the ice appears.

IV

Though wit may flash from fluent lips, and mirth distract the
breast,
Through midnight hours that yield no more their former hope
of rest ;
'T is but as ivy-leaves around the ruined turret wreath,
All green and wildly fresh without, but worn and grey beneath.

V

Oh, could I feel as I have felt, — or be what I have been,
Or weep as I could once have wept, o'er many a vanished
scene ;
As springs, in deserts found, seem sweet, all brackish though
they be,
So, midst the withered waste of life, those tears would flow to
me.

NAPOLEON'S FAREWELL

(From the French)

This poem was written in London in 1815, soon after the battle of Waterloo. It is one of several productions concerned with Napoleon, "the great Emperor who with the great poet divided the wonder of Europe." The anapæstic meter employed in this and several other of Byron's most popular poems is one that lends itself easily to spirited effects. It was a great favorite with Tom Moore, whose influence is clearly seen both here and elsewhere, as in the *Stanzas for Music* and *Stanzas written between Florence and Pisa*.

I

FAREWELL to the Land where the gloom of my Glory
 Arose and o'ershadowed the earth with her name —
 She abandons me now — but the page of her story,
 The brightest or blackest, is filled with my fame.
 I have warred with a World which vanquished me only
 When the meteor of conquest allured me too far ;
 I have coped with the nations which dread me thus lonely,
 The last single Captive to millions in war.

II

Farewell to thee, France ! when thy diadem crowned me,
 I made thee the gem and the wonder of earth, —
 But thy weakness decrees I should leave as I found thee,
 Decayed in thy glory and sunk in thy worth.
 Oh ! for the veteran hearts that were wasted
 In strife with the storm, when their battles were won —
 Then the Eagle, whose gaze in that moment was blasted,
 Had still soared with eyes fixed on Victory's sun !

III

Farewell to thee, France ! — but when Liberty rallies
 Once more in thy regions, remember me then, —

The Violet¹ still grows in the depth of thy valleys ;
 Though withered, thy tear will unfold it again.
 Yet, yet, I may baffle the hosts that surround us,
 And yet may thy heart leap awake to my voice —
 There are links which must break in the chain that has bound
 us,

Then turn thee and call on the Chief of thy choice !

STANZAS FOR MUSIC

(Written in England, March, 1816)

I

THERE be none of Beauty's daughters
 With a magic like thee ;
 And like music on the waters
 Is thy sweet voice to me :
 When, as if its sound were causing
 The charmèd Ocean's pausing,
 The waves lie still and gleaming,
 And the lulled winds seem dreaming :

II

And the Midnight Moon is weaving
 Her bright chain o'er the deep ;
 Whose breast is gently heaving,
 As an infant's asleep :
 So the spirit bows before thee,
 To listen and adore thee ;
 With a full but soft emotion,
 Like the swell of Summer's ocean.

¹ **The violet** : when Napoleon was banished to Elba, in April, 1814, it was predicted by his partisans that he would return to France with the violets in the following spring. For this reason the violet was taken as the Napoleonic emblem. Now, though defeated and exiled, Napoleon is represented in the poem as hoping to return from St. Helena, as he did from Elba.

FARE THEE WELL

The sincerity of this poem, which was written in March, 1816, soon after the separation from Lady Byron and shortly before the poet's final departure from England, has been seriously questioned. It seems almost incredible that any man, even one so spectacular as Byron, could lay bare to the world such emotions. Yet, according to Byron, as quoted by Moore, the verses were written under stress of profound feeling, were not intended for publication, and were given to the public only "through the injudicious zeal of a friend whom he suffered to take a copy."

Alas! they had been friends in youth;
 But whispering tongues can poison truth;
 And Constancy lives in realms above;
 And life is thorny; and youth is vain;
 And to be wroth with one we love,
 Doth work like madness in the brain.

.
 But never either found another
 To free the hollow heart from paining —
 They stood aloof, the scars remaining,
 Like cliffs which had been rent asunder;
 A dreary sea now flows between,
 But neither heat, nor frost, nor thunder,
 Shall wholly do away, I ween,
 The marks of that which once hath been.

— COLERIDGE'S *Christabel*

FARE thee well! and if forever, *l*
 Still forever, fare *thee well*:
 Even though unforgiving, never
 'Gainst thee shall my heart rebel.
 Would that breast were bared before thee
 Where thy head so oft hath lain,
 While that placid sleep came o'er thee
 Which thou ne'er canst know again:
 Would that breast, by thee glanced over,
 Every inmost thought could show!
 Then thou would'st at last discover
 'T was not well to spurn it so.

Though the world for this commend thee —

Though it smile upon the blow,

Even its praises must offend thee,

Founded on another's woe :

Though my many faults defaced me,

Could no other arm be found,

Than the one which once embraced me,

To inflict a cureless wound ?

20

Yet, oh yet, thyself deceive not —

Love may sink by slow decay,

But by sudden wrench, believe not

Hearts can thus be torn away :

Still thine own its life retaineth —

Still must mine, though bleeding, beat ;

And the undying thought which paineth

Is — that we no more may meet.

These are words of deeper sorrow

Than the wail above the dead ;

30

Both shall live — but every morrow

Wake us from a widowed bed.

And when thou would'st solace gather —

When our child's first accents flow —

Wilt thou teach her to say " Father ! "

Though his care she must forego ?

When her little hands shall press thee —

When her lip to thine is pressed —

Think of him whose prayer shall bless thee —

Think of him thy love *had* blessed !

40

Should her lineaments resemble

Those thou never more may'st see,

Then thy heart will softly tremble

With a pulse yet true to me.

All my faults perchance thou knowest —

All my madness — none can know ;

All my hopes — where'er thou goest —
 Wither — yet with *thee* they go.
 Every feeling hath been shaken ;
 Pride — which not a world could bow — 50
 Bows to thee — by thee forsaken,
 Even my soul forsakes me now.
 But 'tis done — all words are idle —
 Words from me are vainer still ;
 But the thoughts we cannot bridle
 Force their way without the will.
 Fare thee well ! thus disunited —
 Torn from every nearer tie —
 Seared in heart — and lone — and blighted —
 More than this I scarce can die. 60

SONNET ON CHILLON

This sonnet, one of the noblest of its kind, though prefixed to *The Prisoner of Chillon*, was in fact written later than that poem as an especial tribute to the Swiss patriot, Bonnivard.

François de Bonnivard was born near Geneva, in 1496, and succeeded in 1510 to the priory of St. Victor, just outside the walls of the city. As an ardent republican, he espoused the cause of Geneva against the Duke of Savoy, on whose entrance into the city in 1519 Bonnivard was seized and imprisoned for two years at Grolée. Again, in 1530, he was captured by robbers and handed over to the Duke, who this time imprisoned him in the famous Castle of Chillon. Here Bonnivard remained for six years, until liberated by the Bernese and Genevese. By this time Geneva had established her freedom, and the patriot was honored and pensioned by the people for whom he had suffered so long. Bonnivard lived in peace through the remainder of his life, wrote a history of Geneva, and, when he died, either in 1570 or in 1571, left his books as a legacy to the city.

ETERNAL Spirit of the chainless Mind !
 Brightest in dungeons, Liberty ! thou art :
 For there thy habitation is the heart —
 The heart which love of thee alone can bind ;

And when thy sons to fetters are consigned —
To fetters, and the damp vault's dayless gloom,
Their country conquers with their martyrdom,
And Freedom's fame finds wings on every wind.
Chillon ! thy prison is a holy place,
And thy sad floor an altar — for 't was trod,
Until his very steps have left a trace
Worn, as if thy cold pavement were a sod,
By Bonnivard ! — May none those marks efface !
For they appeal from tyranny to God.

THE PRISONER OF CHILLON

Among the great lakes of the world, Geneva is famous for the beauty of its surroundings and the depth and purity of its waters. It was known to the Romans as *Lacus Lemannus*, whence Byron's favorite name for it, "Lake Leman."

At the eastern end of Lake Geneva, on an isolated rock at the edge of the water, rises the picturesque building known as the Castle of Chillon, its walls washed by the waters of the lake, which here attain a depth of nearly one thousand feet. The foundations of the castle date from a very early period; though as it stands, with its one central tower surrounded by towers either semicircular or square, it is essentially of the thirteenth century. In the eighteenth century it was used as a state prison, and afterwards as an arsenal. In this building, rendered famous by his genius, Byron lays the scene of his *Prisoner of Chillon*. The hero of the poem is an entirely fictitious personage, whose dreadful captivity bears little resemblance to that of Bonnivard, although the latter is often and wrongly supposed to be the hero. But Byron himself says in the "advertisement" prefixed to *The Prisoner of Chillon*: "When this poem was composed I was not sufficiently aware of the history of Bonnivard, or I should have endeavoured to dignify the subject by an attempt to celebrate his courage and his virtues."

But, although the whole story is purely imaginary, we must allow the poem — in addition to its high poetic truth — a certain measure of historical probability, when we remember the deeds done in the days of religious intolerance and persecution, before men had learned to acknowledge the freedom of the individual conscience.

Byron wrote *The Prisoner of Chillon* in two days — June 26 and 27 1816, while detained by bad weather at the village of Ouchy, near



CASTLE OF CHILLON

Exterior

Lausanne. In dignity of theme and in descriptive power it far surpasses any of the narrative poems that preceded it. The hopeless captivity, the deaths of the two young brothers, the prisoner's grief, his unconsciousness of time and space in

A sea of stagnant idleness,
Blind, boundless, mute, and motionless;

the carol of the bird arousing him from his despair, his contentment with captivity, and at last — the crown of his desolation — his regaining his freedom with a sigh, — all these are scenes that could be adequately pictured only by the hand of a great master.

I

MY hair is grey, but not with years,
Nor grew it white

In a single night,

As men's have grown from sudden fears :
My limbs are bowed, though not with toil,

But rusted with a vile repose,

For they have been a dungeon's spoil,

And mine has been the fate of those

To whom the goodly earth and air

Are banned and barred — forbidden fare ;

10

But this was for my father's faith

I suffered chains and courted death ;

That father perished at the stake

For tenets he would not forsake ;

And for the same his lineal race

In darkness found a dwelling-place ;

We were seven — who now are one,

Six in youth and one in age,

Finished as they had begun,

Proud of Persecution's rage ;

20

One in fire, and two in field,

Their belief with blood have sealed,

Dying as their father died,

For the God their foes denied ; —

Three were in a dungeon cast,
Of whom this wreck is left the last.

II

There are seven pillars of Gothic mould,
In Chillon's dungeons deep and old,
There are seven columns, massy and grey,
Dim with a dull imprisoned ray, 30
A sunbeam which hath lost its way,
And through the crevice and the cleft
Of the thick wall is fallen and left ;
Creeping o'er the floor so damp,
Like a marsh's meteor lamp :
And in each pillar there is a ring,
And in each ring there is a chain ; ¹
That iron is a cankering thing,
For in these limbs its teeth remain,
With marks that will not wear away, 40
Till I have done with this new day,
Which now is painful to these eyes,
Which have not seen the sun so rise
For years — I cannot count them o'er,
I lost their long and heavy score
When my last brother dropped and died,
And I lay living by his side.

III

They chained us each to a column stone,
And we were three — yet, each alone ;
We could not move a single pace, 50
We could not see each other's face,

¹ This is said to be an accurate description of the interior of the castle, except that the third column bears no trace of ever having had a ring. On the southern side of this third column is carved Byron's name.

But with that pale and livid light
That made us strangers in our sight :
And thus together — yet apart,
Fettered in hand, but joined in heart,
'T was still some solace in the dearth
Of the pure elements of earth,
To hearken to each other's speech,
And each turn comforter to each
With some new hope, or legend old, 60
Or song heroically bold ;
But even these at length grew cold.
Our voices took a dreary tone,
An echo of the dungeon stone,
 A grating sound, not full and free
 As they of yore were wont to be :
 It might be fancy — but to me
They never sounded like our own.

IV

I was the eldest of the three,
 And to uphold and cheer the rest 70
 I ought to do — and did — my best —
And each did well in his degree.
 The youngest, whom my father loved,
Because our mother's brow was given
To him, with eyes as blue as heaven —
 For him my soul was sorely moved :
And truly might it be distressed
To see such bird in such a nest ;
For he was beautiful as day —
 (When day was beautiful to me 80
 As to young eagles, being free) —
 A polar day, which will not see

A sunset till its summer's gone,
 Its sleepless summer of long light,
 The snow-clad offspring of the sun :
 And thus he was as pure and bright,
 And in his natural spirit gay,
 With tears for naught but others' ills,
 And then they flowed like mountain rills,
 Unless he could assuage the woe
 Which he abhorred to view below.

90

V

The other was as pure of mind,
 But formed to combat with his kind ;
 Strong in his frame, and of a mood
 Which 'gainst the world in war had stood,
 And perished in the foremost rank
 With joy : — but not in chains to pine :
 His spirit withered with their clank,
 I saw it silently decline —
 And so perchance in sooth did mine :
 But yet I forced it on to cheer
 Those relics of a home so dear.
 He was a hunter of the hills,
 Had followed there the deer and wolf ;
 To him this dungeon was a gulf,
 And fettered feet the worst of ills.

100

VI

Lake Lemman lies by Chillon's walls :
 A thousand feet in depth below
 Its massy waters meet and flow ;
 Thus much the fathom-line was sent
 From Chillon's snow-white battlement,

110

Which round about the wave enthralls :
A double dungeon wall and wave
Have made — and like a living grave.
Below the surface of the lake
The dark vault lies wherein we lay : ¹
We heard it ripple night and day ;
 Sounding o'er our heads it knocked ;
And I have felt the winter's spray
Wash through the bars when winds were high 120
And wanton in the happy sky ;
 And then the very rock hath rocked,
 And I have felt it shake, unshocked,
Because I could have smiled to see
The death that would have set me free.

VII

I said my nearer brother pined,
I said his mighty heart declined ;
He loathed and put away his food ;
It was not that 't was coarse and rude,
For we were used to hunters' fare, 130
And for the like had little care :
The milk drawn from the mountain goat
Was changed for water from the moat ;
Our bread was such as captives' tears
Have moistened many a thousand years,
Since man first pent his fellow men
Like brutes within an iron den ;
But what were these to us or him ?
These wasted not his heart or limb ;
My brother's soul was of that mould 140

¹ The level of the dungeon is now about ten feet above the lake, and could never at any time have been below its surface.

Which in a palace had grown cold,
Had his free breathing been denied
The range of the steep mountain's side ;
But why delay the truth? — he died.
I saw, and could not hold his head,
Nor reach his dying hand — nor dead, —
Though hard I strove, but strove in vain,
To rend and gnash my bonds in twain.
He died — and they unlocked his chain,
And scooped for him a shallow grave 150
Even from the cold earth of our cave.
I begged them, as a boon, to lay
His corse in dust whereon the day
Might shine — it was a foolish thought,
But then within my brain it wrought,
That even in death his freeborn breast
In such a dungeon could not rest.
I might have spared my idle prayer —
They coldly laughed — and laid him there :
The flat and turfless earth above 160
The being we so much did love ;
His empty chain above it leant,
Such Murder's fitting monument !

VIII

But he, the favourite and the flower,
Most cherished since his natal hour,
His mother's image in fair face,
The infant love of all his race,
His martyred father's dearest thought,
My latest care, for whom I sought
To hoard my life, that his might be 170
Less wretched now, and one day free ;

He, too, who yet had held untired
A spirit natural or inspired —
He, too, was struck, and day by day
Was withered on the stalk away.
Oh, God ! it is a fearful thing
To see the human soul take wing
In any shape, in any mood :
I've seen it rushing forth in blood,
I've seen it on the breaking ocean 180
Strive with a swoln convulsive motion,
I've seen the sick and ghastly bed
Of Sin delirious with its dread :
But these were horrors — this was woe
Unmixed with such — but sure and slow :
He faded, and so calm and meek,
So softly worn, so sweetly weak,
So tearless, yet so tender — kind,
And grieved for those he left behind ;
With all the while a cheek whose bloom 190
Was as a mockery of the tomb,
Whose tints as gently sunk away
As a departing rainbow's ray ;
An eye of most transparent light,
That almost made the dungeon bright ;
And not a word of murmur — not
A groan o'er his untimely lot, —
A little talk of better days,
A little hope my own to raise,
For I. was sunk in silence — lost 200
In this last loss, of all the most ;
And then the sighs he would suppress
Of fainting Nature's feebleness,
More slowly drawn, grew less and less :

I listened, but I could not hear ;
 I called, for I was wild with fear ;
 I knew 't was hopeless, but my dread
 Would not be thus admonishèd ;
 I called, and thought I heard a sound —
 I burst my chain with one strong bound, 210
 And rushed to him : — I found him not,
I only stirred in this black spot,
I only lived, *I* only drew
 The accursèd breath of dungeon-dew ;
 The last, the sole, the dearest link
 Between me and the eternal brink,
 Which bound me to my failing race,
 Was broken in this fatal place.
 One on the earth, and one beneath —
 My brothers — both had ceased to breathe ! 220
 I took that hand which lay so still —
 Alas ! *my* own was full as chill ;
 I had not strength to stir, or strive,
 But felt that I was still alive —
 A frantic feeling, when we know
 That what we love shall ne'er be so.
 I know not why
 I could not die,
 I had no earthly hope — but faith,
 And that forbade a selfish death. 230

IX

What next befell me then and there
 I know not well — I never knew —
 First came the loss of light, and air,
 And then of darkness too :
 I had no thought, no feeling — none —

Among the stones I stood a stone,
And was, scarce conscious what I wist,
As shrubless crags within the mist ;
For all was blank, and bleak, and grey ;
It was not night — it was not day ; 240
It was not even the dungeon-light,
So hateful to my heavy sight,
But vacancy absorbing space,
And fixedness — without a place ;
There were no stars — no earth — no time —
No check — no change — no good — no crime —
But silence, and a stirless breath
Which neither was of life nor death ;
A sea of stagnant idleness,
Blind, boundless, mute, and motionless. 250

X

A light broke in upon my brain, —
It was the carol of a bird ;
It ceased, and then it came again,
The sweetest song ear ever heard ;
And mine was thankful till my eyes
Ran over with the glad surprise,
And they that moment could not see
I was the mate of misery ;
But then by dull degrees came back
My senses to their wonted track ; 260
I saw the dungeon walls and floor
Close slowly round me as before ;
I saw the glimmer of the sun
Creeping as it before had done,
But through the crevice where it came
That bird was perched, as fond and tame,

And tamer than upon the tree ;
A lovely bird, with azure wings,
And song that said a thousand things,
And seemed to say them all for me ! 270
I never saw its like before,
I ne'er shall see its likeness more :
It seemed like me to want a mate,
But was not half so desolate,
And it was come to love me when
None lived to love me so again,
And cheering from my dungeon's brink,
Had brought me back to feel and think.
I know not if it late were free,
Or broke its cage to perch on mine, 280
But knowing well captivity,
Sweet bird ! I could not wish for thine !
Or if it were, in wingèd guise,
A visitant from Paradise ;
For — Heaven forgive that thought ! the while
Which made me both to weep and smile —
I sometimes deemed that it might be
My brother's soul come down to me ;
But then at last away it flew,
And then 't was mortal well I knew, 290
For he would never thus have flown —
And left me twice so doubly lone, —
Lone — as the corse within its shroud ;
Lone — as a solitary cloud,
A single cloud on a sunny day,
While all the rest of heaven is clear,
A frown upon the atmosphere,
That hath no business to appear
When skies are blue, and earth is gay.

XI

A kind of change came in my fate, 300
My keepers grew compassionate ;
I know not what had made them so,
They were inured to sights of woe,
But so it was : — my broken chain
With links unfastened did remain,
And it was liberty to stride
Along my cell from side to side,
And up and down, and then athwart,
And tread it over every part ;
And round the pillars one by one, 310
Returning where my walk begun,
Avoiding only, as I trod,
My brothers' graves without a sod ;
For if I thought with heedless tread
My step profaned their lowly bed,
My breath came gaspingly and thick,
And my crushed heart felt blind and sick.

XII

I made a footing in the wall,
It was not therefrom to escape,
For I had buried one and all, 320
Who loved me in a human shape ;
And the whole earth would henceforth be
A wider prison unto me :
No child — no sire — no kin had I,
No partner in my misery ;
I thought of this, and I was glad,
For thought of them had made me mad ;
But I was curious to ascend
To my barred windows, and to bend

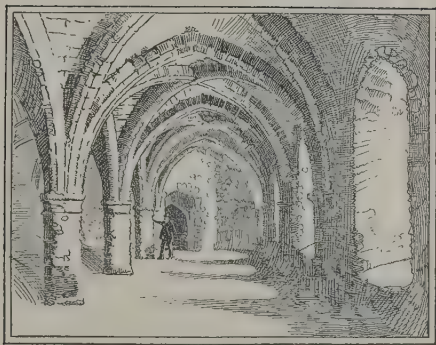
Once more, upon the mountains high, 330
The quiet of a loving eye.

XIII

I saw them, and they were the same,
They were not changed like me in frame;
I saw their thousand years of snow
On high — their wide long lake below,
And the blue Rhone in fullest flow;
I heard the torrents leap and gush
O'er channelled rock and broken bush;
I saw the white-walled distant town,¹
And whiter sails go skimming down; 340
And then there was a little isle,
Which in my very face did smile,
The only one in view;
A small green isle,² it seemed no more,
Scarce broader than my dungeon floor,
But in it there were three tall trees,
And o'er it blew the mountain breeze,
And by it there were waters flowing,
And on it there were young flowers growing,
Of gentle breath and hue. 350
The fish swam by the castle wall,
And they seemed joyous each and all;
The eagle rode the rising blast,
Methought he never flew so fast
As then to me he seemed to fly;

¹ Villeneuve.

² "Between the entrances of the Rhone and Villeneuve, not far from Chillon, is a very small island; the only one I could perceive, in my voyage round and over the lake, within its circumference. It contains a few trees (I think not above three), and from its singleness and diminutive size has a peculiar effect upon the view." — *Byron's note.*



CASTLE OF CHILLON

Interior

And then new tears came in my eye,
And I felt troubled — and would fain
I had not left my recent chain ;
And when I did descend again,
The darkness of my dim abode
Fell on me as a heavy load ;
It was as is a new-dug grave,
Closing o'er one we sought to save, —
And yet my glance, too much opprest,
Had almost need of such a rest.

360

XIV

It might be months, or years, or days —
I kept no count, I took no note —
I had no hope my eyes to raise,
And clear them of their dreary mote ;
At last men came to set me free ;
I asked not why, and recked not where ;
It was at length the same to me,
Fettered or fetterless to be,
I learned to love despair.
And thus when they appeared at last,
And all my bonds aside were cast,
These heavy walls to me had grown
A hermitage — and all my own !
And half I felt as they were come
To tear me from a second home :
With spiders I had friendship made,
And watched them in their sullen trade,
Had seen the mice by moonlight play,
And why should I feel less than they?
We were all inmates of one place,
And I, the monarch of each race,

370

380

Had power to kill — yet, strange to tell !
 In quiet we had learned to dwell ;
 My very chains and I grew friends,
 So much a long communion tends
 To make us what we are ; — even I
 Regained my freedom with a sigh.

390

STANZAS TO AUGUSTA

These stanzas were written at the Villa Diodati, near Geneva, July, 1816, and form one of several poems addressed to the poet's half-sister, Augusta (Mrs. Leigh), who was true to her brother through all his career, and for whom he felt the warmest affection up to the very end of his life. This is but one among Byron's many autobiographical poems, the egotism of which is amply redeemed by the revelation of a rich and interesting personality.

I

THOUGH the day of my Destiny's over,
 And the star of my Fate hath declined,
 Thy soft heart refused to discover
 The faults which so many could find ;
 Though thy soul with my grief was acquainted,
 It shrunk not to share it with me,
 And the Love which my Spirit hath painted
 It never hath found but in *Thee*.

II

Then when Nature around me is smiling,
 The last smile which answers to mine,
 I do not believe it beguiling,
 Because it reminds me of thine ;
 And when winds are at war with the ocean,
 As the breasts I believed in with me,
 If their billows excite an emotion,
 It is that they bear me from *Thee*.

III

Though the rock of my last Hope is shivered,
And its fragments are sunk in the wave,
Though I feel that my soul is delivered
To Pain — it shall not be its slave.
There is many a pang to pursue me:
They may crush, but they shall not condemn —
They may torture, but shall not subdue me —
'T is of *Thee* that I think — not of them.

IV

Though human, thou didst not deceive me,
Though woman, thou didst not forsake,
Though loved, thou forborest to grieve me,
Though slandered, thou never couldst shake, —
Though trusted, thou didst not disclaim me,
Though parted, it was not to fly,
Though watchful, 't was not to defame me,
Nor, mute, that the world might belie.

V

Yet I blame not the World, nor despise it,
Nor the war of the many with one;
If my soul was not fitted to prize it,
'T was folly not sooner to shun:
And if dearly that error hath cost me,
And more than I once could foresee,
I have found that, whatever it lost me,
It could not deprive me of *Thee*.

VI

From the wreck of the past, which hath perished,
Thus much I at least may recall,

It hath taught me that what I most cherished
 Deserved to be dearest of all :
 In the Desert a fountain is springing,
 In the wide waste there still is a tree,
 And a bird in the solitude singing,
 Which speaks to my spirit of *Thee*.

PROMETHEUS

Prometheus was written in July, 1816, at the Villa Diodati. Here began the most interesting of Byron's friendships, that with his great fellow-poet, Shelley. This poem, in subject at least, shows the influence of Shelley, who afterwards, in his *Prometheus Unbound*, produced a lyrical drama on the same theme,—a favorite one since the days of Æschylus. Byron's protest against tyranny is here voiced in a strain rather more elevated than was characteristic of him. The student will find it interesting to compare Byron's poem with the fine *Prometheus* of Longfellow. (For the story of Prometheus, see Gayley's *Classic Myths* (1903), pp. 44-46.)

I

TITAN! to whose immortal eyes
 The sufferings of mortality,
 Seen in their sad reality,
 Were not as things that gods despise;
 What was thy pity's recompense?
 A silent suffering, and intense;
 The rock, the vulture, and the chain,
 All that the proud can feel of pain,
 The agony they do not show,
 The suffocating sense of woe,
 Which speaks but in its loneliness,
 And then is jealous lest the sky
 Should have a listener, nor will sigh
 Until its voice is echoless.

II

Titan ! to thee the strife was given
Between the suffering and the will,
Which torture where they cannot kill ;
And the inexorable Heaven,
And the deaf tyranny of Fate,
The ruling principle of Hate,
Which for its pleasure doth create
The things it may annihilate,
Refused thee even the boon to die :
The wretched gift Eternity
Was thine — and thou hast borne it well.
All that the Thunderer wrung from thee
Was but the Menace which flung back
On him the torments of thy rack ;
The fate thou didst so well foresee,
But would not to appease him tell ;
And in thy Silence was his Sentence,
And in his Soul a vain repentance,
And evil dread so ill dissembled
That in his hand the lightnings trembled.

III

Thy Godlike crime was to be kind,
To render with thy precepts less
The sum of human wretchedness,
And strengthen Man with his own mind ;
But baffled as thou wert from high,
Still in thy patient energy,
In the endurance, and repulse
Of thine impenetrable Spirit,
Which Earth and Heaven could not convulse,
A mighty lesson we inherit :

Thou art a symbol and a sign
 To Mortals of their fate and force ;
 Like thee, Man is in part divine,
 A troubled stream from a pure source ;
 And Man in portions can foresee
 His own funereal destiny ;
 His wretchedness, and his resistance,
 And his sad unallied existence :
 To which his Spirit may oppose
 Itself — an equal to all woes —
 And a firm will, and a deep sense,
 Which even in torture can descry
 Its own concentrated recompense,
 Triumphant where it dares defy,
 And making Death a Victory.

WHEN WE TWO PARTED

(Written between 1814 and 1816)

I

WHEN we two parted
 In silence and tears,
 Half broken-hearted
 To sever for years,
 Pale grew thy cheek and cold,
 Colder thy kiss ;
 Truly that hour foretold
 Sorrow to this.

II

The dew of the morning
 Sunk chill on my brow —

It felt like the warning
Of what I feel now.
Thy vows are all broken,
And light is thy fame :
I hear thy name spoken,
And share in its shame.

III

They name thee before me,
A knell to mine ear ;
A shudder comes o'er me —
Why wert thou so dear?
They know not I knew thee,
Who knew thee too well : —
Long, long shall I rue thee,
Too deeply to tell.

IV

In secret we met —
In silence I grieve,
That thy heart could forget,
Thy spirit deceive.
If I should meet thee
After long years,
How should I greet thee? —
With silence and tears.

THE COLISEUM BY MOONLIGHT

(From *Manfred*, Act III, Scene IV ; written in Venice, April,
1817)

SCENE IV. *Interior of the tower*

MANFRED *alone*

THE stars are forth, the moon above the tops
Of the snow-shining mountains. — Beautiful !
I linger yet with Nature, for the Night
Hath been to me a more familiar face
Than that of man ; and in her starry shade
Of dim and solitary loveliness,
I learned the language of another world.
I do remember me, that in my youth,
When I was wandering, — upon such a night
I stood within the Coliseum's wall, 10
'Midst the chief relics of almighty Rome ;
The trees which grew along the broken arches
Waved dark in the blue midnight, and the stars
Shone through the rents of ruin ; from afar
The watch-dog bayed beyond the Tiber ; and
More near from out the Cæsar's palace came
The owl's long cry, and, interruptedly,
Of distant sentinels the fitful song
Begun and died upon the gentle wind.
Some cypresses beyond the time-worn breach 20
Appeared to skirt the horizon, yet they stood
Within a bowshot. Where the Cæsars dwelt,
And dwell the tuneless birds of night, amidst
A grove which springs through levelled battlements,
And twines its roots with the imperial hearths,

Ivy usurps the laurel's place of growth ; —
 But the gladiators' bloody Circus stands,
 A noble wreck in ruinous perfection,
 While Cæsar's chambers, and the Augustan halls,
 Grovel on earth in indistinct decay. — 30
 And thou didst shine, thou rolling Moon, upon
 All this, and cast a wide and tender light,
 Which softened down the hoar austerity
 Of rugged desolation, and filled up,
 As 't were anew, the gaps of centuries ;
 Leaving that beautiful which still was so,
 And making that which was not — till the place
 Became religion, and the heart ran o'er
 With silent worship of the Great of old, —
 The dead, but sceptred, Sovereigns, who still rule 40
 Our spirits from their urns.

TO THOMAS MOORE ✓

(Written July, 1817)

I

MY boat is on the shore,
 And my bark is on the sea ;
 But, before I go, Tom Moore,
 Here 's a double health to thee !

II

Here 's a sigh to those who love me,
 And a smile to those who hate ;
 And, whatever sky 's above me,
 Here 's a heart for every fate.

III

Though the Ocean roar around me,
Yet it still shall bear me on ;
Though a desert should surround me,
It hath springs that may be won.

IV

Were 't the last drop in the well,
As I gasped upon the brink,
Ere my fainting spirit fell,
'T is to thee that I would drink.

V

With that water, as this wine,
The libation I would pour
Should be — peace with thine and mine,
And a health to thee, Tom Moore.

SELECTIONS FROM CHILDE HAROLD

Childe Harold is a series of descriptive, reflective, and lyrical stanzas, strung together on a slender thread of narrative. It is divided into four cantos, and is written in the nine-line stanza of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, — a measure that, in Byron's hands, becomes an instrument of many strings.

The impressions made upon the poet by his tour through Portugal, Spain, Albania, and Greece are recorded in the first two cantos of *Childe Harold*, which, when published in March,¹ 1812, inspired Byron's oft-quoted remark, "I awoke one morning and found myself famous." Among much that is trivial and commonplace, certain stanzas in Cantos I and II rise into greatness.

But there is a vast gulf fixed between the first two and the last two cantos of *Childe Harold*. Cantos III and IV, published in 1816 and 1818, respectively, first showed the world the scope of Byron's genius. They form an imperishable contribution to literature. Their subject-matter is furnished by the scenery and historical associations of Belgium, the Rhine, Switzerland, and Italy. But *Childe Harold* is no mere versified notebook. Here Byron's passion for the grander aspects of nature — the mountains and the sea — finds its highest expression. The poem is even more than a series of brilliant scenic descriptions: it is, as the poet himself says, "a mark of respect for what is venerable, and of feeling for what is glorious." Byron's sense of historic continuity and his vivid imagination bring the dead past to life again, with its art and literature, its great deeds and its mighty men, — "The glory that was Greece, the grandeur that was Rome."

GREECE BEFORE THE REVOLUTION OF 1821

(From Canto II)

Though Greece, enslaved by the Turks and rent by domestic discord, showed at this period little capacity for self-government, she yet regained her independence as the result of the revolution begun in 1821. Some twelve years after writing the present stanzas Byron was to offer up his own life upon the altar of Grecian freedom.

¹ Nicol, *Byron* (English Men of Letters), gives February 29; but Leslie Stephen, article "Byron," *Dictionary of National Biography*, gives March; and E. H. Coleridge, *Poetical Works of Lord Byron* (1 vol.), gives March 10.

II

ANCIENT of days ! august Athena ! where,
 Where are thy men of might ? thy grand in soul ?
 Gone—glimmering through the dream of things that were :
 First in the race that led to Glory's goal,
 They won, and passed away — is this the whole ?
 A schoolboy's tale, the wonder of an hour !
 The Warrior's weapon and the Sophist's stole
 Are sought in vain, and o'er each mouldering tower,
 Dim with the mist of years, gray flits the shade of power.

LXXIII

Fair Greece ! sad relic of departed Worth !
 Immortal, though no more ; though fallen, great !
 Who now shall lead thy scattered children forth,
 And long-accustomed bondage uncreate ?
 Not such thy sons who whilome did await,
 The hopeless warriors of a willing doom,
 In bleak Thermopylæ's ¹ sepulchral strait —
 Oh ! who that gallant spirit shall resume,
 Leap from Eurotas' ² banks, and call thee from the tomb ?

LXXIV

Spirit of Freedom ! when on Phyle's brow
 Thou sat'st with Thrasybulus ³ and his train,
 Couldst thou forebode the dismal hour which now
 Dims the green beauties of thine Attic plain ?

¹ *Thermopylæ* : a narrow pass on the eastern coast, through which ran the only road from northern to southern Greece. Here, in 480 B.C., Leonidas, the Spartan, with three hundred Spartans and seven hundred Thespians, met the Persian army of Xerxes. Although the Greeks were slain to a man, "Thermopylæ" has become a synonym for the most exalted patriotism.

² *Eurotas* : a river of Greece, on which Sparta was situated.

³ *Thrasybulus* : an Athenian general and statesman who, in 403 B.C., by seizing Phyle and the Piræus, overthrew the Thirty Tyrants of Athens and restored the democracy.

Not thirty tyrants now enforce the chain,
 But every *carle*¹ can lord it o'er thy land ;
 Nor rise thy sons, but idly rail in vain,
 Trembling beneath the scourge of Turkish hand,
 From birth till death enslaved — in word, in deed, unmanned.

LXXVI

Hereditary Bondsmen ! know ye not
Who would be free *themselves* must strike the blow ?
 By their right arms the conquest must be wrought ?
 Will Gaul or Muscovite² redress ye ? No !
 True — they may lay your proud despoilers low,
 But not for you will Freedom's Altars flame.
 Shades of the Helots !³ triumph o'er your foe !
 Greece ! change thy lords, thy state is still the same ;
 Thy glorious day is o'er, but not thine years of shame.

LXXXVII

Yet are thy skies as blue, thy crags as wild ;
 Sweet are thy groves, and verdant are thy fields,
 Thine olives ripe as when Minerva smiled,
 And still his honey'd wealth Hymettus⁴ yields ;
 There the blithe bee his fragrant fortress builds,
 The free-born wanderer of thy mountain air ;
 Apollo still thy long, long summer gilds,
 Still in his beam Mendeli's⁵ marbles glare ;
 Art, Glory, Freedom fail, but Nature still is fair.

¹ *Carle* : rustic, boor. ² *Gaul or Muscovite* : Frenchman or Russian.

³ *Helots* : a class of serfs among the ancient Spartans. They were owned by the state, were cruelly treated, and sometimes massacred. Now, says Byron, in the present degraded state of Greece the shades of the Helots can triumph over the descendants of their oppressors.

⁴ *Hymettus* : the ancient name of a mountain southeast of Athens, celebrated for its honey.

⁵ *Mendeli* : the modern name of Pentelicus, a mountain near Athens famous for its marble.

LXXXVIII

Where'er we tread 't is haunted, holy ground ;
 No earth of thine is lost in vulgar mould,
 But one vast realm of Wonder spreads around,
 And all the Muse's tales seem truly told,
 Till the sense aches with gazing to behold
 The scenes our earliest dreams have dwelt upon ;
 Each hill and dale, each deepening glen and wold
 Defies the power which crushed thy temples gone :
 Age shakes Athena's tower,¹ but spares gray Marathon.²

THE EVE BEFORE WATERLOO

(From Canto III)

On the night of June 15, 1815, traditionally the "eve before Waterloo," the Duchess of Richmond gave a ball in Brussels, near which the English army was encamped. Wellington, though uncertain of Napoleon's movements, ordered his officers to attend the ball, in order to avert a panic among the townspeople. While "all went merry as a marriage bell" Napoleon approached the city. On the following day was fought the battle of Quatrebras ; two days later, Waterloo.

XXI

THERE was a sound of revelry by night,
 And Belgium's Capital had gathered then
 Her Beauty and her Chivalry — and bright
 The lamps shone o'er fair women and brave men ;
 A thousand hearts beat happily ; and when
 Music arose with its voluptuous swell,
 Soft eyes looked love to eyes which spake again,
 And all went merry as a marriage bell ;
 But hush ! hark ! a deep sound strikes like a rising knell.

¹ Athena's tower : probably refers to the Parthenon at Athens.

² Marathon : a plain eighteen miles northeast of Athens, where, in 490 B.C., Miltiades, with eleven thousand Greeks, defeated a hundred thousand Persians, thus saving Europe from the "barbarians."

XXII

Did ye not hear it? — No — 't was but the Wind,
Or the car rattling o'er the stony street ;
On with the dance ! let joy be unconfined ;
No sleep till morn, when Youth and Pleasure meet
To chase the glowing Hours with flying feet —
But hark ! — that heavy sound breaks in once more,
As if the clouds its echo would repeat ;
And nearer — clearer — deadlier than before !
Arm ! Arm ! it is — it is — the cannon's opening roar !

XXIV

Ah ! then and there was hurrying to and fro —
And gathering tears, and tremblings of distress,
And cheeks all pale, which but an hour ago
Blushed at the praise of their own loveliness —
And there were sudden partings, such as press
The life from out young hearts, and choking sighs
Which ne'er might be repeated ; who could guess
If ever more should meet those mutual eyes,
Since upon night so sweet such awful morn could rise !

XXV

And there was mounting in hot haste — the steed,
The mustering squadron, and the clattering car,
Went pouring forward with impetuous speed,
And swiftly forming in the ranks of war —
And the deep thunder peal on peal afar ;
And near, the beat of the alarming drum
Roused up the soldier ere the Morning Star ;
While thronged the citizens with terror dumb,
Or whispering, with white lips — “The foe ! They come !
they come !”

THE RHINE

(From Canto III)

L

BUT Thou, exulting and abounding river !
 Making thy waves a blessing as they flow
 Through banks whose beauty would endure for ever
 Could man but leave thy bright creation so,
 Nor its fair promise from the surface mow
 With the sharp scythe of conflict, — then to see
 Thy valley of sweet waters, were to know
 Earth paved like Heaven — and to seem such to me,
 Even now what wants thy stream ? — that it should Lethe¹ be.

LIX

Adieu to thee, fair Rhine ! How long delighted
 The stranger fain would linger on his way !
 Thine is a scene alike where souls united,
 Or lonely Contemplation thus might stray ;
 And could the ceaseless vultures cease to prey
 On self-condemning bosoms, it were here,
 Where Nature, nor too sombre nor too gay,
 Wild but not rude, awful yet not austere,
 Is to the mellow Earth as Autumn to the year.

LX

Adieu to thee again ! a vain adieu !
 There can be no farewell to scene like thine ;
 The mind is coloured by thy every hue ;
 And if reluctantly the eyes resign

¹ *Lethe* : in Greek mythology a river of the lower world, whose waters, when drunk by the souls, brought oblivion of all former existence.

Their cherished gaze upon thee, lovely Rhine !
 'T is with the thankful glance of parting praise ;
 More mighty spots may rise — more glaring shine,
 But none unite, in one attaching maze,
 The brilliant, fair, and soft, — the glories of old days,

LXI

The negligently grand, the fruitful bloom
 Of coming ripeness, the white city's sheen,
 The rolling stream, the precipice's gloom,
 The forest's growth, and Gothic walls between, —
 The wild rocks shaped, as they had turrets been,
 In mockery of man's art ; and these withal
 A race of faces happy as the scene,
 Whose fertile bounties here extend to all,
 Still springing o'er thy banks, though Empires near them fall.

VENICE

(From Canto IV)

These stanzas form what is perhaps the noblest of all poetical tributes to Venice, a city that has shared with Florence the especial love of great English poets. Compare Byron's more elaborate *Ode on Venice*, beginning,

“ Oh Venice ! Venice ! when thy marble walls
 Are level with the waters, there shall be
 A cry of nations o'er thy sunken halls,
 A loud lament along the sweeping sea ! ”

I

I STOOD in Venice, on the “ Bridge of Sighs ” ;
 A Palace and a Prison on each hand :
 I saw from out the wave her structures rise
 As from the stroke of the Enchanter's wand :
 A thousand Years their cloudy wings expand

Around me, and a dying Glory smiles
 O'er the far times, when many a subject land
 Looked to the wingèd Lion's marble piles,
 Where Venice sate in state, throned on her hundred isles !

II

She looks a sea Cybele,¹ fresh from Ocean,
 Rising with her tiara of proud towers
 At airy distance, with majestic motion,
 A Ruler of the waters and their powers :
 And such she was ; — her daughters had their dowers
 From spoils of nations, and the exhaustless East
 Poured in her lap all gems in sparkling showers ;
 In purple was she robed, and of her feast
 Monarchs partook, and deemed their dignity increased.

III

In Venice Tasso's echoes² are no more,
 And silent rows the songless Gondolier ;
 Her palaces are crumbling to the shore,
 And Music meets not always now the ear :
 Those days are gone — but Beauty still is here.
 States fall — Arts fade — but Nature doth not die,
 Nor yet forget how Venice once was dear,
 The pleasant place of all festivity,
 The Revel of the earth — the Masque of Italy !

¹ **A sea Cybele:** Cybele, originally an Asiatic goddess, was later identified with the Greek Rhea, mother of the gods. The source of social progress and civilization, she was also regarded as the founder of towns and cities, and for this reason is represented in art as crowned with a diadem of towers. She travelled riding on a lion or in a chariot drawn by lions. Byron's reference to Venice as a "sea Cybele" is hence peculiarly appropriate. Venice was a mother of civilization and the arts, wore a "tiara of proud towers," and had for her standard the "wingèd Lion."

² **Tasso's echoes:** in the days when Venice was an independent state it is said that a favorite song of the gondoliers consisted of selections from Tasso's famous epic poem, *Jerusalem Delivered*, translated from the Tuscan into the Venetian dialect.

THE "CASCATA DEL MARMORE"

(From Canto IV)

The "Marble Cascade" is fifty-three miles northeast of Rome, near the city of Terni. It is formed by the Velino River, and falls six hundred and fifty feet. Byron says: "I saw the Cascata del Marmore of Terni twice, at different periods, — once from the summit of the precipice, and again from the valley below. The lower view is far to be preferred, if the traveller has time for one only; but in any point of view, either from above or below, it is worth all the cascades and torrents of Switzerland put together: the Staubach, Reichenbach, fall of Arpenaz, etc., are rills in comparative appearance. Of the fall of Schaffhausen I cannot speak, not yet having seen it." — *Byron's note*

LXIX

THE roar of waters! — from the headlong height
 Velino cleaves the wave-worn precipice;
 The fall of waters! rapid as the light
 The flashing mass foams, shaking the abyss;
 The Hell of Waters! where they howl and hiss,
 And boil in endless torture; while the sweat
 Of their great agony, wrung out from this
 Their Phlegethon,¹ curls round the rocks of jet
 That gird the gulf around, in pitiless horror set,

LXX

And mounts in spray the skies, and thence again
 Returns in an unceasing shower, which round,
 With its unemptied cloud of gentle rain,
 Is an eternal April to the ground,
 Making it all one emerald: — how profound
 The gulf! and how the Giant Element
 From rock to rock leaps with delirious bound,
 Crushing the cliffs, which, downward worn and rent
 With his fierce footsteps, yield in chasms a fearful vent

¹ Phlegethon: in Greek mythology, a river of fire in the lower world.

LXXI

To the broad column which rolls on, and shows
More like the fountain of an infant sea
Torn from the womb of mountains by the throes
Of a new world, than only thus to be
Parent of rivers, which flow gushingly,
With many windings, through the vale : — Look back !
Lo ! where it comes like an Eternity,
As if to sweep down all things in its track,
Charming the eye with dread, — a matchless cataract,

LXXII

Horribly beautiful ! but on the verge,
From side to side, beneath the glittering morn,
An Iris¹ sits, amidst the infernal surge,
Like Hope upon a death-bed, and, unworn
Its steady dyes, while all around is torn
By the distracted waters, bears serene
Its brilliant hues with all their beams unshorn :
Resembling, mid the torture of the scene,
Love watching Madness with unalterable mien.

ROME

(From Canto IV)

“ I have been some days in Rome the Wonderful. I am delighted with Rome. As a whole — ancient and modern — it beats Greece, Constantinople, everything, — at least that I have ever seen. But I can't describe, because my first impressions are always strong and confused, and my memory selects and reduces them to order, like distance in the landscape, and blends them better, although they may be less distinct. I have been on horseback most of the day,

¹ Iris : not the flower, known as the *fleur de lys*, but the *rainbow* so characteristic of Alpine torrents and found by Byron at the Marble Cascade also.

all days since my arrival. I have been to Albano, its lakes, and to the top of the Alban Mount, and to Frascati, Aricia, etc. As for the Coliseum, Pantheon, etc., etc., they are quite inconceivable, and must be seen." — *Byron's Letters, May, 1817*

LXXVIII

O H, Rome ! my Country ! City of the Soul !
 The orphans of the heart must turn to thee,
 Lone Mother of dead Empires ! and control
 In their shut breasts their petty misery.
 What are our woes and sufferance ? Come and see
 The cypress — hear the owl — and plod your way
 O'er steps of broken thrones and temples — Ye !
 Whose agonies are evils of a day —
 A world is at our feet as fragile as our clay.

LXXIX

The Niobe ¹ of nations ! there she stands,
 Childless and crownless, in her voiceless woe ;
 An empty urn within her withered hands,
 Whose holy dust was scattered long ago ;
 The Scipios' tomb ² contains no ashes now ;
 The very sepulchres lie tenantless
 Of their heroic dwellers : dost thou flow,
 Old Tiber ! through a marble wilderness ?
 Rise, with thy yellow waves, and mantle her distress.

¹ **Niobe** : according to the Greek myth, the daughter of Tantalus and wife of Amphion. She had seven sons and seven daughters, whom she proclaimed to be superior to Apollo and Artemis, children of Leto. For this impiety the gods destroyed all her children. Niobe, through her grief, was turned to stone, but still wept eternally. Thus she has become the type of "voiceless woe."

² **The Scipios' tomb** : discovered in 1780 within the limits of the modern city of Rome. The Scipios formed one of the greatest families of Rome — the one above all others who made her mistress of the world. Byron perhaps means that Rome not only has no Scipios at the present day, but has lost even the very traditions of patriotism.

THE DYING GLADIATOR

(From Canto IV)

This scene, although suggested by the famous statue in the Capitoline Museum in Rome, is supposed to have taken place in the Coliseum.

Gladiators were either voluntary or forced. The latter were largely recruited from the ranks of barbarian captives, one of whom forms the subject of the following stanzas.

CXL

I SEE before me the Gladiator lie :
 He leans upon his hand — his manly brow
 Consents to death, but conquers agony,
 And his drooped head sinks gradually low —
 And through his side the last drops, ebbing slow
 From the red gash, fall heavy, one by one,
 Like the first of a thunder-shower ; and now
 The arena swims around him — he is gone,
 Ere ceased the inhuman shout which hailed the wretch who
 won.

CXLI

He heard it, but he heeded not — his eyes
 Were with his heart — and that was far away ;
 He recked not of the life he lost nor prize,
 But where his rude hut by the Danube lay —
There were his young barbarians all at play,
There was their Dacian ¹ mother — he, their sire,
 Butchered to make a Roman holiday —
 All this rushed with his blood — Shall he expire
 And unavenged ? — Arise ! ye Goths, ² and glut your ire !

¹ **Dacia** : a region, on the north bank of the Danube, which supplied many of the gladiators for the Coliseum.

² **Goths** : under Alaric the Goths sacked Rome in 410 A.D.

THE OCEAN

(From Canto IV)

Byron's love of nature, though ardent and sincere, was reserved chiefly for her grander aspects. Both the mountains and the sea called to him with irresistible appeal, and both he celebrated in verse that fairly rises to the sublimity of his themes. The following stanzas, though hackneyed, can never grow old, such is their glorious energy and power.

CLXXVIII

THERE is a pleasure in the pathless woods,
There is a rapture on the lonely shore,
There is society, where none intrudes,
By the deep Sea, and Music in its roar :
I love not Man the less, but Nature more,
From these our interviews, in which I steal
From all I may be, or have been before,
To mingle with the Universe, and feel
What I can ne'er express — yet cannot all conceal.

CLXXIX

Roll on, thou deep and dark blue Ocean — roll !
Ten thousand fleets sweep over thee in vain ;
Man marks the earth with ruin — his control
Stops with the shore ; — upon the watery plain
The wrecks are all thy deed, nor doth remain
A shadow of man's ravage, save his own,
When, for a moment, like a drop of rain,
He sinks into thy depths with bubbling groan —
Without a grave — unknelled, uncoffined, and unknown.

CLXXXI

The armaments which thunderstrike the walls
Of rock-built cities, bidding nations quake,

And Monarchs tremble in their Capitals ;
The oak Leviathans, whose huge ribs make
Their clay creator the vain title take
Of Lord of thee, and Arbiter of War —
These are thy toys, and, as the snowy flake,
They melt into thy yeast of waves, which mar
Alike the Armada's pride, or spoils of Trafalgar.¹

CLXXXII

Thy shores are empires, changed in all save thee —
Assyria — Greece — Rome — Carthage — what are they ?
Thy waters washed them power while they were free, -
And many a tyrant since ; their shores obey
The stranger, slave, or savage ; their decay
Has dried up realms to deserts : — not so thou,
Unchangeable save to thy wild waves' play ;
'Time writes no wrinkle on thine azure brow —
Such as Creation's dawn beheld, thou rollest now.

CLXXXIII

'Thou glorious mirror, where the Almighty's form
Glasses itself in tempests ; in all time,
Calm or convulsed — in breeze, or gale, or storm —
Icing the Pole, or in the torrid clime
Dark-heaving — boundless, endless, and sublime —
The image of Eternity — the throne
Of the Invisible ; even from out thy slime
The monsters of the deep are made — each Zone
Obeys thee — thou goest forth, dread, fathomless, alone.

¹ **Armada, Trafalgar:** two of the most decisive naval events in history. The Spanish fleet, known as the "Armada," was met and partly destroyed by the English in 1588. Terrible storms completed the destruction. The battle of Trafalgar, in which the English, under Lord Nelson, won a famous victory over the French fleet, under Admiral Villeneuve, was fought in 1805 near the coast of Spain, off Cape Trafalgar.

CLXXXIV

And I have loved thee, Ocean! and my joy
Of youthful sports was on thy breast to be
Borne, like thy bubbles, onward : from a boy
I wantoned with thy breakers — they to me
Were a delight ; and if the freshening sea
Made them a terror — 't was a pleasing fear,
For I was as it were a Child of thee,
And trusted to thy billows far and near,
And laid my hand upon thy mane — as I do here.

MAZEPPA

In *Mazeppa*, which he wrote at Venice in 1818, Byron reverts to the meter of his earlier romances and of *The Prisoner of Chillon*. The incident of Mazeppa's ride is historical, though of course transfigured by the poet's imagination.

The Ukraine (Borderland) was a name formerly applied to a district of uncertain boundaries, forming part of the old kingdom of Poland, but now belonging entirely to Russia. The inhabitants were Cossacks, a mixed race with Polish, Russian, and Tartar blood in their veins. Wild and free, they lived in the saddle and were engaged in constant warfare. They were organized into a government by the king of Poland in the sixteenth century ; but, to escape oppression, less than a century later they revolted to Russia.

This brings us down to the time of Mazeppa, a famous "hetman," or chief of the Cossacks, who was born somewhere in the Ukraine, the exact place of his birth being a matter of dispute, as is the time, which is variously stated as 1640 and as 1644. Mazeppa was educated as a page at the court of John Casimir, king of Poland. Here occurred the romantic incident that Byron has taken as the basis of his narrative. Having been detected in an intrigue with a Polish lady of high rank, Mazeppa was bound naked to the back of a wild Tartar horse, who fled with him into the wilderness — the Ukraine ; whether to Mazeppa's own home, as some assert, or to the native haunts of the horse, as others say, does not greatly affect the romance of the story.

Mazeppa remained among the Cossacks of the Ukraine, and in 1687 became their chief. Although subsequently made Prince of the Ukraine by Peter the Great, he desired independence of Russia, and

so conspired with Charles the Twelfth of Sweden, with whom he was defeated at Pultowa. After Pultowa he accompanied Charles to Bender, and there died, the same or the following year.

Mazeppa's story has been a favorite theme for writers. The Russian novelist Bulgarin used it in a novel, and the Russian poet Pushkin made Mazeppa the hero of his drama, *Poltàva*. But Byron's spirited narrative is the most celebrated treatment of the subject. The poet doubtless gained his historic facts from the *Histoire de Charles XII* by Voltaire, whose brief and matter-of-fact account is quoted in the "Advertisement" prefixed to the original edition of *Mazeppa*, 1819. Even the mere setting of Byron's poem is significant and suggestive: after the great defeat the old Hetman, pursued and fleeing, yet bold and dauntless as ever, tells to the despairing and wounded king of Sweden the wild and romantic story of his youth. The rush of the terrible ride through the forests and over the plains, Mazeppa's absolute helplessness, his hot anger and fruitless scorn, his torture by cold and thirst, his peril from the wolves, his passage of the river, form the main elements of a story that perhaps only Byron could have told with such breathless energy and graphic power.

I

'T WAS after dread Pultowa's¹ day,
 When fortune left the royal Swede —
 Around a slaughtered army lay,
 No more to combat and to bleed.
 The power and glory of the war,
 Faithless as their vain votaries, men,
 Had passed to the triumphant Czar,
 And Moscow's walls were safe again —
 Until a day more dark and drear
 And a more memorable year,
 Should give to slaughter and to shame
 A mightier host and haughtier name;
 A greater wreck, a deeper fall,
 A shock to one — a thunderbolt to all.²

10

¹ **Pultowa:** a city in southwestern Russia, near which Peter the Great won a famous victory over Charles the Twelfth, on July 8, 1709. This battle marked the beginning of Charles's downward career and the rise of Russia.

² Napoleon began his retreat from Moscow on October 19, 1812.

II

Such was the hazard of the die ;
The wounded Charles ¹ was taught to fly
By day and night through field and flood,
Stained with his own and subjects' blood ;
For thousands fell that flight to aid :
And not a voice was heard to upbraid 20
Ambition in his humbled hour,
When Truth had nought to dread from Power.
His horse was slain, and Gieta ² gave
His own — and died the Russians' slave.
This, too, sinks after many a league
Of well-sustained but vain fatigue ;
And in the depth of forests darkling
The watch-fires in the distance sparkling —
The beacons of surrounding foes —
A king must lay his limbs at length. 30
Are these the laurels and repose
For which the nations strain their strength?
They laid him by a savage tree,
In outworn Nature's agony ;
His wounds were stiff, his limbs were stark ;
The heavy hour was chill and dark ;
The fever in his blood forbade
A transient slumber's fitful aid :
And thus it was ; but yet through all,
Kinglike the Monarch bore his fall, 40
And made, in this extreme of ill,
His pangs the vassals of his will :
All silent and subdued were they,
As once the nations round him lay.

¹ Charles had been wounded in the foot ten days before the battle of Pultowa.

² Gieta : a Swedish officer.

III

A band of chiefs ! — alas ! how few,
Since but the fleeting of a day
Had thinned it ; but this wreck was true
And chivalrous : upon the clay
Each sate him down, all sad and mute,
Beside his monarch and his steed ; 50
For danger levels man and brute,
And all are fellows in their need.
Among the rest, Mazeppa made
His pillow in an old oak's shade —
Himself as rough, and scarce less old,
The Ukraine's Hetman, calm and bold ;
But first, outspent with this long course,
The Cossack prince rubbed down his horse,
And made for him a leafy bed,
And smoothed his fetlocks and his mane, 60
And slacked his girth, and stripped his rein,
And joyed to see how well he fed ;
For until now he had the dread
His wearied courser might refuse
To browse beneath the midnight dews :
But he was hardy as his lord,
And little cared for bed and board ;
But spirited and docile too,
Whate'er was to be done, would do.
Shaggy and swift, and strong of limb, 70
All Tartar-like he carried him ;
Obeyed his voice, and came to call,
And knew him in the midst of all :
Though thousands were around, — and Night,
Without a star, pursued her flight, —
That steed from sunset until dawn
His chief would follow like a fawn.

IV

This done, Mazeppa spread his cloak,
And laid his lance beneath his oak,
Felt if his arms in order good 80
The long day's march had well withstood —
If still the powder filled the pan,
And flints unloosened kept their lock —
His sabre's hilt and scabbard felt,
And whether they had chafed his belt ;
And next the venerable man,
From out his havresack and can,
Prepared and spread his slender stock ;
And to the Monarch and his men
The whole or portion offered then 90
With far less of inquietude
Than courtiers at a banquet would.
And Charles of this his slender share
With smiles partook a moment there,
To force of cheer a greater show,
And seem above both wounds and woe ; —
And then he said : " Of all our band,
Though firm of heart and strong of hand,
In skirmish, march, or forage, none
Can less have said or more have done 100
Than thee, Mazeppa ! On the earth
So fit a pair had never birth,
Since Alexander's days till now,
As thy Bucephalus¹ and thou :
All Scythia's² fame to thine should yield
For pricking³ on o'er flood and field."

¹ **Bucephalus** : a favorite horse of Alexander the Great.

² **Scythia** : an ill-defined region of western Asia and southeastern Europe, regarded by the Romans as the home of the best horsemen in the world.

³ **Pricking** : spurring.

Mazeppa answered, "Ill betide
 The school wherein I learned to ride!"
 Quoth Charles, "Old Hetman, wherefore so,
 Since thou hast learned the art so well?"

110

Mazeppa said, "'T were long to tell;
 And we have many a league to go,
 With every now and then a blow,
 And ten to one at least the foe,
 Before our steeds may graze at ease,
 Beyond the swift Borysthenes:¹
 And, Sire, your limbs have need of rest,
 And I will be the sentinel
 Of this your troop." — "But I request,"
 Said Sweden's monarch, "thou wilt tell
 This tale of thine, and I may reap,
 Perchance, from this the boon of sleep;
 For at this moment from my eyes
 The hope of present slumber flies."

120

"Well, Sire, with such a hope, I'll track
 My seventy years of memory back:
 I think 't was in my twentieth spring, —
 Ay, 't was, — when Casimir was king —
 John Casimir,² — I was his page
 Six summers, in my earlier age:
 A learnèd monarch, faith! was he,
 And most unlike your majesty;
 He made no wars, and did not gain
 New realms to lose them back again;
 And (save debates in Warsaw's diet)

130

¹ Borysthenes: the Dnieper.

² John Casimir: king of Poland from 1648 to 1668. He *did*, in fact, make war, but was always rather more of a monk than of a king. After an unsuccessful reign he abdicated in 1668 and died in France in 1672.

He reigned in most unseemly quiet ;
 Not that he had no cares to vex ;
 He loved the muses and the Sex ;
 And sometimes these so froward are,
 They made him wish himself at war ; 140
 But soon his wrath being o'er, he took
 Another mistress, or new book :
 And then he gave prodigious fêtes —
 All Warsaw gathered round his gates
 To gaze upon his splendid court,
 And dames and chiefs, of princely port.
 He was the Polish Solomon,
 So sung his poets, all but one,
 Who, being unpensioned, made a satire,
 And boasted that he could not flatter. 150
 It was a court of jousts and mimes,
 Where every courtier tried at rhymes ;
 Even I for once produced some verses,
 And signed my odes 'Despairing Thyrsis.'
 There was a certain Palatine,¹
 A count of far and high descent,
 Rich as a salt or silver mine ; ²
 And he was proud, ye may divine,
 As if from heaven he had been sent :
 He had such wealth in blood and ore 160
 As few could match beneath the throne ;
 And he would gaze upon his store,
 And o'er his pedigree would pore,

¹ **Palatine** : a term of varied significance : but Byron probably means either a nobleman of high rank, charged with certain duties at court, or one endowed by the sovereign with privileges and judicial prerogatives inferior only to those of the king himself.

² **Rich as a salt mine** : a pardonable comparison, when it is remembered that the wealth of the region once known as Poland lies largely in its salt mines.

Until by some confusion led,
 Which almost looked like want of head,
 He thought their merits were his own.
 His wife was not of this opinion ;
 His junior she by thirty years,
 Grew daily tired of his dominion ;
 And, after wishes, hopes, and fears, 170
 To virtue a few farewell tears,
 A restless dream or two, some glances
 At Warsaw's youth, some songs, and dances
 Awaited but the usual chances,
 Those happy accidents which render
 The coldest dames so very tender,
 To deck her Count with titles given,
 'T is said, as passports into Heaven ;
 But, strange to say, they rarely boast
 Of these, who have deserved them most. 180

V

"I was a goodly stripling then ;
 At seventy years I so may say,
 That there were few, or boys, or men,
 Who, in my dawning time of day,
 Of vassal or of knight's degree,
 Could vie in vanities with me ;
 For I had strength — youth — gaiety,
 A port, not like to this ye see,
 But smooth, as all is rugged now ;
 For Time, and Care, and War, have ploughed 190
 My very soul from out my brow ;
 And thus I should be disavowed
 By all my kind and kin, could they
 Compare my day and yesterday :

This change was wrought, too, long ere age
Had ta'en my features for his page :
With years, ye know, have not declined
My strength — my courage — or my mind,
Or at this hour I should not be
Telling old tales beneath a tree, 200
With starless skies my canopy.

But let me on : Theresa's form —
Methinks it glides before me now,
Between me and yon chestnut's bough,
The memory is so quick and warm ;
And yet I find no words to tell
The shape of her I loved so well :
She had the Asiatic eye,

Such as our Turkish neighbourhood
Hath mingled with our Polish blood, 210
Dark as above us is the sky ;
But through it stole a tender light,
Like the first moonrise of midnight ;
Large, dark, and swimming in the stream,
Which seemed to melt to its own beam ;
All love, half languor, and half fire,
Like saints that at the stake expire,
And lift their raptured looks on high,
As though it were a joy to die.

A brow like a midsummer lake, 220
Transparent with the sun therein,
When waves no murmur dare to make,
And Heaven beholds her face within.
A cheek and lip — but why proceed ?

I loved her then, I love her still ;
And such as I am, love indeed
In fierce extremes — in good and ill.

But still we love even in our rage,
And haunted to our very age
With the vain shadow of the past, — 230
As is Mazeppa to the last.

VI

“We met — we gazed — I saw, and sighed ;
She did not speak, and yet replied ;
There are ten thousand tones and signs
We hear and see, but none defines —
Involuntary sparks of thought,
Which strike from out the heart o’erwrought,
And form a strange intelligence,
Alike mysterious and intense,
Which link the burning chain that binds, 240
Without their will, young hearts and minds ;
Conveying, as the electric wire,
We know not how, the absorbing fire.
I saw, and sighed — in silence wept,
And still reluctant distance kept,
Until I was made known to her,
And we might then and there confer
Without suspicion — then, even then,
 I longed, and was resolved to speak ;
But on my lips they died again, 250
 The accents tremulous and weak,
Until one hour. — There is a game,
 A frivolous and foolish play,
 Wherewith we while away the day ;
It is — I have forgot the name —
And we to this, it seems, were set,
By some strange chance, which I forget :
I recked not if I won or lost,

It was enough for me to be
So near to hear, and oh ! to see 260
The being whom I loved the most.
I watched her as a sentinel,
(May ours this dark night watch as well !)
Until I saw, and thus it was,
That she was pensive, nor perceived
Her occupation, nor was grieved
Nor glad to lose or gain ; but still
Played on for hours, as if her will
Yet bound her to the place, though not
That hers might be the winning lot. 270
Then through my brain the thought did pass,
Even as a flash of lightning there,
That there was something in her air
Which would not doom me to despair ;
And on the thought my words broke forth,
All incoherent as they were ;
Their eloquence was little worth,
But yet she listened — 't is enough —
Who listens once will listen twice ;
Her heart, be sure, is not of ice — 280
And one refusal no rebuff.

VII

“ I loved, and was beloved again —
They tell me, Sire, you never knew
Those gentle frailties ; if 't is true,
I shorten all my joy or pain ;
To you 't would seem absurd as vain ;
But all men are not born to reign,
Or o'er their passions, or as you
Thus o'er themselves and nations too.

I am — or rather *was* — a Prince, 290
 A chief of thousands, and could lead
 Them on where each would foremost bleed ;
 But could not o'er myself evince
 The like control. — But to resume :
 I loved, and was beloved again ;
 In sooth, it is a happy doom,
 But yet where happiest ends in pain.
 We met in secret, and the hour
 Which led me to that lady's bower
 Was fiery Expectation's dower. 300
 My days and nights were nothing — all
 Except that hour which doth recall,
 In the long lapse from youth to age,
 No other like itself : I'd give
 The Ukraine back again to live
 It o'er once more, and be a page,
 The happy page, who was the lord
 Of one soft heart, and his own sword,
 And had no other gem nor wealth,
 Save Nature's gift of Youth and Health. 310
 We met in secret — doubly sweet,
 Some say, they find it so to meet ;
 I know not that — I would have given
 My life but to have called her mine
 In the full view of Earth and Heaven ;
 For I did oft and long repine
 That we could only meet by stealth.

VIII

“ For lovers there are many eyes,
 And such there were on us ; the Devil
 On such occasions should be civil — 320

The Devil ! — I 'm loth to do him wrong,

It might be some untoward saint,
Who would not be at rest too long,

But to his pious bile gave vent —
But one fair night, some lurking spies
Surprised and seized us both.

The Count was something more than wroth —

I was unarmed ; but if in steel,
All cap-à-pie from head to heel,
What 'gainst their numbers could I do?

330

'T was near his castle, far away

From city or from succour near,
And almost on the break of day ;
I did not think to see another,

My moments seemed reduced to few ;
And with one prayer to Mary Mother,

And, it may be, a saint or two,
As I resigned me to my fate,
They led me to the castle gate :

Theresa's doom I never knew,
Our lot was henceforth separate.

340

An angry man, ye may opine,
Was he, the proud Count Palatine ;
And he had reason good to be,

But he was most enraged lest such
An accident should chance to touch
Upon his future pedigree ;

Nor less amazed, that such a blot
His noble 'scutcheon should have got,
While he was highest of his line ;

350

Because unto himself he seemed
The first of men, nor less he deemed
In others' eyes, and most in mine.

'Sdeath ! with a *page* — perchance a king
 Had reconciled him to the thing ;
 But with a stripling of a page —
 I felt — but cannot paint his rage.

IX

“ ‘ Bring forth the horse ! ’ — the horse was brought !

In truth, he was a noble steed,

A Tartar of the Ukraine breed, 360

Who looked as though the speed of thought

Were in his limbs ; but he was wild,

Wild as the wild deer, and untaught,

With spur and bridle undefiled —

'T was but a day he had been caught ;

And snorting, with erected mane,

And struggling fiercely, but in vain,

In the full foam of wrath and dread

To me the desert-born was led :

They bound me on, that menial throng, 370

Upon his back with many a thong ;

They loosed him with a sudden lash —

Away ! — away — and on we dash ! —

Torrents less rapid and less rash.

X

“ Away ! — away ! — My breath was gone,

I saw not where he hurried on :

'T was scarcely yet the break of day,

And on he foamed — away ! — away !

The last of human sounds which rose,

As I was darted from my foes, 380

Was the wild shout of savage laughter,

Which on the wind came roaring after

A moment from that rabble rout :
With sudden wrath I wrenched my head,
 And snapped the cord, which to the mane
 Had bound my neck in lieu of rein,
And, writhing half my form about,
Howled back my curse ; but 'midst the tread,
The thunder of my courser's speed,
Perchance they did not hear nor heed : 390
It vexes me — for I would fain
Have paid their insult back again.
I paid it well in after days :
There is not of that castle gate,
Its drawbridge and portcullis' weight,
Stone — bar — moat — bridge — or barrier left ;
Nor of its fields a blade of grass,
 Save what grows on a ridge of wall,
 Where stood the hearth-stone of the hall ;
And many a time ye there might pass, 400
Nor dream that e'er the fortress was.
I saw its turrets in a blaze,
Their crackling battlements all cleft,
 And the hot lead pour down like rain
From off the scorched and blackening roof
Whose thickness was not vengeance-proof.
 They little thought that day of pain,
When launched, as on the lightning's flash,
They bade me to destruction dash,
 That one day I should come again, 410
With twice five thousand horse, to thank
 The Count for his uncourteous ride.
They played me then a bitter prank,
 When, with the wild horse for my guide,
They bound me to his foaming flank :

At length I played them one as frank —
 For Time at last sets all things even —
 And if we do but watch the hour,
 There never yet was human power
 Which could evade, if unforgiven,
 The patient search and vigil long
 Of him who treasures up a wrong.

420

XI

“Away, away, my steed and I,
 Upon the pinions of the wind.
 All human dwellings left behind,
 We sped like meteors through the sky,
 When with its crackling sound the night
 Is chequered with the Northern light.
 Town — village — none were on our track,

 But a wild plain of far extent,
 And bounded by a forest black ;

430

 And, save the scarce seen battlement
 On distant heights of some stronghold,
 Against the Tartars¹ built of old,
 No trace of man. The year before,
 A Turkish army had marched o'er ;
 And where the Spahi's² hoof hath trod,
 The verdure flies the bloody sod :
 The sky was dull, and dim, and gray,

¹ **Tartar**: the Tartars, or *Tatars*, were originally the Mongolian tribes of eastern Asia. Afterwards the term was used in a vague sense to include the various Asiatic tribes and races led into Europe by Genghis Khan about 1225 A.D. In a more restricted sense, the “Tartars” were certain tribes, largely of Turkish race, who lived in Siberia and central and southeastern Russia, and made inroads upon the Russians and Poles. Hence the “strongholds” along the Polish frontier. Byron may here refer either to the Tartar incursions of Genghis Khan or to the predatory inroads of the “Tartar” tribes of southeastern Russia.

² **Spahi**: a Turkish cavalryman.

And a low breeze crept moaning by — 440
I could have answered with a sigh —
But fast we fled — away ! away ! —
And I could neither sigh nor pray ;
And my cold sweat-drops fell like rain
Upon the courser's bristling mane ;
But, snorting still with rage and fear,
He flew upon his far career :
At times I almost thought, indeed,
He must have slackened in his speed ;
But no — my bound and slender frame 450
Was nothing to his angry might,
And merely like a spur became :
Each motion which I made to free
My swoln limbs from their agony
Increased his fury and affright :
I tried my voice, — 't was faint and low —
But yet he swerved as from a blow ;
And, starting to each accent, sprang
As from a sudden trumpet's clang :
Meantime my cords were wet with gore, 460
Which, oozing through my limbs, ran o'er ;
And in my tongue the thirst became
A something fierier far than flame.

XII

“ We neared the wild wood — 't was so wide,
I saw no bounds on either side :
'T was studded with old sturdy trees,
That bent not to the roughest breeze
Which howls down from Siberia's waste,
And strips the forest in its haste, —
But these were few and far between, 470

Set thick with shrubs more young and green,
Luxuriant with their annual leaves,
Ere strown by those autumnal eves
That nip the forest's foliage dead,
Discolored with a lifeless red,
Which stands thereon like stiffened gore
Upon the slain when battle's o'er ;
And some long winter's night hath shed
Its frosts o'er every tombless head —
So cold and stark, the raven's beak
May peck unpierced each frozen cheek :
'T was a wild waste of underwood,
And here and there a chestnut stood,
The strong oak, and the hardy pine ;
But far apart — and well it were,
Or else a different lot were mine :

480

The boughs gave way, and did not tear
My limbs ; and I found strength to bear
My wounds, already scarred with cold ;
My bonds forbade to loose my hold.
We rustled through the leaves like wind, —
Left shrubs, and trees, and wolves behind ;
By night I heard them on the track,
Their troop came hard upon our back,
With their long gallop, which can tire
The hound's deep hate, and hunter's fire :
Where'er we flew they followed on,
Nor left us with the morning sun ;
Behind I saw them, scarce a rood,
At daybreak winding through the wood,
And through the night had heard their feet
Their stealing, rustling step repeat.
Oh ! how I wished for spear or sword,

490

500

At least to die amidst the horde,
And perish — if it must be so —
At bay, destroying many a foe !
When first my courser's race begun,
I wished the goal already won ;
But now I doubted strength and speed :
Vain doubt ! his swift and savage breed 510
Had nerved him like the mountain-roe —
Nor faster falls the blinding snow
Which whelms the peasant near the door
Whose threshold he shall cross no more,
Bewildered with the dazzling blast,
Than through the forest-paths he passed —
Untired, untamed, and worse than wild —
All furious as a favored child
Balked of its wish ; or — fiercer still —
A woman piqued — who has her will ! 520

XIII

“The wood was passed ; ’t was more than noon,
But chill the air, although in June ;
Or it might be my veins ran cold —
Prolonged endurance tames the bold ;
And I was then not what I seem,
But headlong as a wintry stream,
And wore my feelings out before
I well could count their causes o’er :
And what with fury, fear, and wrath,
The tortures which beset my path — 530
Cold — hunger — sorrow — shame — distress —
Thus bound in Nature’s nakedness ;
Sprung from a race whose rising blood
When stirred beyond its calmer mood,

And trodden hard upon, is like
The rattle-snake's, in act to strike —
What marvel if this worn-out trunk
Beneath its woes a moment sunk ?
The earth gave way, the skies rolled round,
I seemed to sink upon the ground ; 540
But erred — for I was fastly bound.
My heart turned sick, my brain grew sore,
And throbbed awhile, then beat no more :
The skies spun like a mighty wheel ;
I saw the trees like drunkards reel,
And a slight flash sprang o'er my eyes,
Which saw no farther. He who dies
Can die no more than then I died,
O'ertortured by that ghastly ride.
I felt the blackness come and go, 550
 And strove to wake ; but could not make
My senses climb up from below :
I felt as on a plank at sea,
When all the waves that dash o'er thee,
At the same time upheave and whelm,
And hurl thee towards a desert realm.
My undulating life was as
The fancied lights that flitting pass
Our shut eyes in deep midnight, when
Fever begins upon the brain ; 560
But soon it passed, with little pain,
 But a confusion worse than such :
 I own that I should deem it much,
Dying, to feel the same again ;
And yet I do suppose we must
Feel far more e'er we turn to dust !
No matter ! I have bared my brow
Full in Death's face — before — and now.

XIV

“ My thoughts came back. Where was I? Cold,
And numb, and giddy : pulse by pulse 570
Life reassumed its lingering hold,
And throb by throb, — till grown a pang
Which for a moment would convulse,
My blood reflowed, though thick and chill ;
My ear with uncouth noises rang,
My heart began once more to thrill ;
My sight returned, though dim ; alas !
And thickened, as it were, with glass.
Methought the dash of waves was nigh ;
There was a gleam too of the sky, 580
Studded with stars ; — it is no dream ;
The wild horse swims the wilder stream !
The bright broad river’s gushing tide
Sweeps, winding onward, far and wide,
And we are half-way, struggling o’er
To yon unknown and silent shore.
The waters broke my hollow trance,
And with a temporary strength
My stiffened limbs were rebaptized.
My courser’s broad breast proudly braves, 590
And dashes off the ascending waves,
And onward we advance !
We reach the slippery shore at length,
A haven I but little prized,
For all behind was dark and drear,
And all before was night and fear.
How many hours of night or day
In those suspended pangs I lay,
I could not tell ; I scarcely knew
If this were human breath I drew. 600

XV

“With glossy skin, and dripping mane,
 And reeling limbs, and reeking flank,
 The wild steed’s sinewy nerves still strain
 Up the repelling bank.

We gain the top : a boundless plain
 Spreads through the shadow of the night,
 And onward, onward, onward — seems,
 Like precipices in our dreams,

To stretch beyond the sight ;

And here and there a speck of white,

610

Or scattered spot of dusky green,

In masses broke into the light,

As rose the moon upon my right :

But nought distinctly seen

In the dim waste would indicate

The omen of a cottage gate ;

No twinkling taper from afar

Stood like a hospitable star ;

Not even an ignis-fatuus rose

To make him merry with my woes :

620

That very cheat had cheered me then !

Although detected, welcome still,

Reminding me, through every ill,

Of the abodes of men.

XVI

“Onward we went — but slack and slow ;

His savage force at length o’erspent,

The drooping courser, faint and low,

All feebly foaming went :

A sickly infant had had power

To guide him forward in that hour !

630

But, useless all to me,
His new-born tameness nought availed —
My limbs were bound ; my force had failed,
Perchance, had they been free.
With feeble effort still I tried
To rend the bonds so starkly tied,
But still it was in vain ;
My limbs were only wrung the more,
And soon the idle strife gave o'er,
Which but prolonged their pain. 640
The dizzy race seemed almost done,
Although no goal was nearly won :
Some streaks announced the coming sun —
How slow, alas ! he came !
Methought that mist of dawning gray
Would never dapple into day ;
How heavily it rolled away !
Before the eastern flame
Rose crimson, and deposed the stars,
And called the radiance from their cars, 650
And filled the earth, from his deep throne,
With lonely lustre, all his own.

XVII

“Uprose the sun ; the mists were curled
Back from the solitary world
Which lay around — behind — before.
What bootéd it to traverse o'er
Plain — forest — river ? Man nor brute,
Nor dint of hoof, nor print of foot,
Lay in the wild luxuriant soil —
No sign of travel, none of toil — 660
The very air was mute :

And not an insect's shrill small horn,
 Nor matin bird's new voice was borne
 From herb nor thicket. Many a *werst*,¹
 Panting as if his heart would burst,
 The weary brute still staggered on ;
 And still we were — or seemed — alone :
 At length, while reeling on our way,
 Methought I heard a courser neigh
 From out yon tuft of blackening firs.
 Is it the wind those branches stirs?
 No, no ! from out the forest prance

670

A trampling troop ; I see them come !
 In one vast squadron they advance !

I strove to cry — my lips were dumb !
 The steeds rush on in plunging pride ;
 But where are they the reins to guide ?
 A thousand horse, and none to ride !
 With flowing tail, and flying mane,
 Wide nostrils never stretched by pain,
 Mouths bloodless to the bit or rein,
 And feet that iron never shod,
 And flanks unscarred by spur or rod,
 A thousand horse, the wild, the free,
 Like waves that follow o'er the sea,

680

Came thickly thundering on,
 As if our faint approach to meet !
 The sight re-nerved my courser's feet,
 A moment staggering, feebly fleet,
 A moment, with a faint low neigh,

690

He answered, and then fell !
 With gasps and glazing eyes he lay,
 And reeking limbs immoveable,

¹ *Werst* : a Russian measure equivalent to about three fifths of an English mile

His first and last career is done !
On came the troop — they saw him stoop,
They saw me strangely bound along
His back with many a bloody thong.
They stop — they start — they snuff the air,
Gallop a moment here and there,
Approach, retire, wheel round and round, 700
Then plunging back with sudden bound,
Headed by one black mighty steed,
Who seemed the Patriarch of his breed,
Without a single speck or hair
Of white upon his shaggy hide ;
They snort — they foam — neigh — they swerve aside
And backward to the forest fly,
By instinct, from a human eye.

They left me there to my despair,
Linked to the dead and stiffening wretch, 710
Whose lifeless limbs beneath me stretch,
Relieved from that unwonted weight,
From whence I could not extricate
Nor him nor me — and there we lay,
The dying on the dead !
I little deemed another day
Would see my houseless, helpless head.

“ And there from morn till twilight bound,
I felt the heavy hours toil round,
With just enough of life to see 720
My last of suns go down on me,
In hopeless certainty of mind,
That makes us feel at length resigned
To that which our foreboding years
Presents the worst and last of fears :

Inevitable — even a boon,
Nor more unkind for coming soon,
Yet shunned and dreaded with such care,
As if it only were a snare

That Prudence might escape :

730

At times both wished for and implored,
At times sought with self-pointed sword,
Yet still a dark and hideous close
To even intolerable woes,

And welcome in no shape.

And, strange to say, the sons of pleasure,
They who have revelled beyond measure
In beauty, wassail, wine, and treasure,
Die calm, or calmer, oft than he
Whose heritage was Misery :

740

For he who hath in turn run through
All that was beautiful and new,

Hath nought to hope, and nought to leave ;
And, save the future (which is viewed
Not quite as men are base or good,
But as their nerves may be endued),

With nought perhaps to grieve :

The wretch still hopes his woes must end,
And Death, whom he should deem his friend,
Appears, to his distempered eyes,
Arrived to rob him of his prize,
The tree of his new Paradise.

750

To-morrow would have given him all,
Repaid his pangs, repaired his fall ;
To-morrow would have been the first
Of days no more deplored or curst,
But bright, and long, and beckoning years,
Seen dazzling through the mist of tears,

Guerdon of many a painful hour ;
To-morrow would have given him power 760
To rule — to shine — to smite — to save —
And must it dawn upon his grave?

XVIII

“The sun was sinking — still I lay
Chained to the chill and stiffening steed !
I thought to mingle there our clay ;
And my dim eyes of death had need,
No hope arose of being freed.
I cast my last looks up the sky,
And there between me and the sun
I saw the expecting raven fly, 770
Who scarce would wait till both should die,
Ere his repast begun ;
He flew, and perched, then flew once more,
And each time nearer than before ;
I saw his wing through twilight flit,
And once so near me he alit
I could have smote, but lacked the strength ;
But the slight motion of my hand,
And feeble scratching of the sand,
The exerted throat’s faint struggling noise, 780
Which scarcely could be called a voice,
Together scared him off at length.
I know no more — my latest dream
Is something of a lovely star
Which fixed my dull eyes from afar,
And went and came with wandering beam,
And of the cold — dull — swimming — dense
Sensation of recurring sense,
And then subsiding back to death,

And then again a little breath,790
 A little thrill — a short suspense,
 An icy sickness curdling o'er
 My heart, and sparks that crossed my brain —
 A gasp — a throb — a start of pain,
 A sigh — and nothing more.

XIX

“I woke — where was I? — Do I see
 A human face look down on me?
 And doth a roof above me close?
 Do these limbs on a couch repose?
 Is this a chamber where I lie?800
 And is it mortal yon bright eye,
 That watches me with gentle glance?
 I closed my own again once more,
 As doubtful that my former trance
 Could not as yet be o'er.
 A slender girl, long-haired, and tall,
 Sate watching by the cottage wall:
 The sparkle of her eye I caught,
 Even with my first return of thought;
 For ever and anon she threw810
 A prying, pitying glance on me
 With her black eyes so wild and free:
 I gazed, and gazed, until I knew
 No vision it could be, —
 But that I lived, and was released
 From adding to the vulture's feast:
 And when the Cossack maid beheld
 My heavy eyes at length unsealed,
 She smiled — and I essayed to speak,
 But failed — and she approached, and made

With lip and finger signs that said, 821
I must not strive as yet to break
The silence, till my strength should be
Enough to leave my accents free ;
And then her hand on mine she laid,
And smoothed the pillow for my head,
And stole along on tiptoe tread,

And gently oped the door, and spake
In whispers — ne'er was voice so sweet !
Even music followed her light feet ; — 830

But those she called were not awake,
And she went forth ; but, ere she passed,
Another look on me she cast,

Another sign she made, to say,
That I had nought to fear, that all
Were near, at my command or call,

And she would not delay
Her due return : — while she was gone,
Methought I felt too much alone.

XX

“ She came with mother and with sire — 840
What need of more ? — I will not tire
With long recital of the rest,
Since I became the Cossack's guest.
They found me senseless on the plain,

They bore me to the nearest hut,
They brought me into life again, —
Me — one day o'er their realm to reign

Thus the vain fool who strove to glut
His rage, refining on my pain,

Sent me forth to the wilderness, 850
Bound — naked — bleeding — and alone,

To pass the desert to a throne, —
 What mortal his own doom may guess?
 Let none despond, let none despair !
 To-morrow the Borysthenes
 May see our coursers graze at ease
 Upon his Turkish bank, — and never
 Had I such welcome for a river
 As I shall yield when safely there.
 Comrades, good night ! ” — The Hetman threw 860
 His length beneath the oak-tree shade,
 With leafy couch already made —
 A bed nor comfortless nor new
 To him, who took his rest whene’er
 The hour arrived, no matter where :
 His eyes the hastening slumbers steep. —
 And if ye marvel Charles forgot
 To thank his tale, *he* wondered not, —
 The king had been an hour asleep !

STANZAS

(Written, probably at Venice, in 1819)

I

COULD Love for ever
 Run like a river,
 And Time’s endeavour
 Be tried in vain —
 No other pleasure
 With this could measure ;
 And like a treasure
 We’d hug the chain.
 But since our sighing

Ends not in dying,
 And, formed for flying,
 Love plumes his wing ;
 Then for this reason
 Let 's love a season ;
 But let that season be only Spring.

II

When lovers parted
 Feel broken-hearted,
 And, all hopes thwarted,
 Expect to die ;
 A few years older,
 Ah ! how much colder
 They might behold her
 For whom they sigh !
 When linked together,
 In every weather,
 They pluck Love's feather
 From out his wing —
 He 'll stay for ever,
 But sadly shiver
 Without his plumage, when past the Spring.

.

STANZAS WRITTEN ON THE ROAD BETWEEN
 FLORENCE AND PISA

(Written in 1821)

I

OH, talk not to me of a name great in story —
 The days of our Youth are the days of our glory ;
 And the myrtle and ivy of sweet two-and-twenty
 Are worth all your laurels, though ever so plenty.

II

What are garlands and crowns to the brow that is wrinkled ?
'T is but as a dead flower with May-dew besprinkled :
Then away with all such from the head that is hoary !
What care I for the wreaths that can *only* give glory ?

III

Oh FAME ! — if I e'er took delight in thy praises,
'T was less for the sake of thy high-sounding phrases,
Than to see the bright eyes of the dear One discover,
She thought that I was not unworthy to love her.

IV

There chiefly I sought thee, *there* only I found thee ;
Her Glance was the best of the rays that surround thee ;
When it sparkled o'er aught that was bright in my story,
I knew it was Love, and I felt it was Glory.

SELECTIONS FROM DON JUAN

Don Juan is undoubtedly Byron's masterpiece, on which his claim to immortality must largely rest. It was the last and by far the most elaborate of his productions, and had attained a length of over fifteen thousand lines when the poet's departure for Greece left it forever unfinished. *Don Juan* is in many ways a marvelous poem, but especially so in its perfectly sustained art; while its remarkable mingling of satire and sentiment, cynicism and pathos, sublimity and absurdity, shows forth Byron himself, with all his complexities and contradictions of character. With the possible exception of Butler's *Hudibras*, it is the wittiest of English poems, and as a complete picture of its age it is certainly unique. Its verse form, the Italian *ottava rima*, or eight-line stanza, is handled with an ease and a variety of effect unsurpassed in literature. Whatever the subject-matter, the style of *Don Juan* never falls below a high level of excellence, although the poet's moods change with startling rapidity from grave to gay, often leaving the reader in doubt as to what effect was intended. But such anticlimaxes form an essential part of the poem. Through the perfection of its art, its scathing satire, true pathos, and brilliant wit, *Don Juan* must forever take its place among the great sustained poems of the world.

"'TIS SWEET TO HEAR . . ."

(From Canto I)

CXXII

'Tis sweet to hear

At midnight on the blue and moonlit deep
The song and oar of Adria's¹ gondolier,
By distance mellowed, o'er the waters sweep;
'Tis sweet to see the evening star appear;
'Tis sweet to listen as the night-winds creep
From leaf to leaf; 't is sweet to view on high
The rainbow, based on ocean, span the sky.

¹ *Adria* : the Adriatic Sea. In this instance Byron perhaps refers to Venice, the "bride of the Adriatic."

CXXIII

'T is sweet to hear the watch-dog's honest bark
 Bay deep-mouthed welcome as we draw near home ;
 'T is sweet to know there is an eye will mark
 Our coming, and look brighter when we come ;
 'T is sweet to be awakened by the lark,
 Or lulled by falling waters ; sweet the hum
 Of bees, the voice of girls, the song of birds,
 The lisp of children, and their earliest words.

CXXIV

Sweet is the vintage, when the showering grapes
 In Bacchanal profusion reel to earth,
 Purple and gushing : sweet are our escapes
 From civic revelry to rural mirth ;
 Sweet to the miser are his glittering heaps ;
 Sweet to the father is his first-born's birth ;
 Sweet is revenge — especially to women —
 Pillage to soldiers, prize-money to seamen.

THE SHIPWRECK

(From Canto II)

This marvelous piece of description, probably the most famous of its kind, is a mosaic from various sources, one of which is the account, given by the poet's grandfather, John Byron, of the loss of "The Wager," in 1741, in the Straits of Magellan. No mere selection can do justice to Byron's descriptive and comic art. The story of Juan's shipwreck, followed by famine, despair, the death of his companions, and his own final rescue, should be read as a whole.

XXIV

THE ship, called the most holy "Trinidad,"
 Was steering duly for the port Leghorn ;
 For there the Spanish family Moncada
 Were settled long ere Juan's sire was born :

They were relations, and for them he had a
Letter of introduction, which the morn
Of his departure had been sent him by
His Spanish friends for those in Italy.

XXV

His suite consisted of three servants and
A tutor, the licentiate Pedrillo,
Who several languages did understand,
But now lay sick and speechless on his pillow,
And, rocking in his hammock, longed for land,
His headache being increased by every billow ;
And the waves oozing through the porthole made
His berth a little damp, and him afraid.

XXVI

'T was not without some reason, for the wind
Increased at night, until it blew a gale ;
And though 't was not much to a naval mind,
Some landsmen would have looked a little pale,
For sailors are, in fact, a different kind ;
At sunset they began to take in sail,
For the sky showed it would come on to blow,
And carry away, perhaps, a mast or so.

XXVII

At one o'clock the wind with sudden shift
Threw the ship right into the trough of the sea,
Which struck her aft, and made an awkward rift,
Started the stern-post, also shattered the
Whole of her stern-frame, and, ere she could lift
Herself from out her present jeopardy,
The rudder tore away : 't was time to sound
The pumps, and there were four feet water found.

XXX

As day advanced the weather seemed to abate,
And then the leak they reckoned to reduce,
And keep the ship afloat, though three feet yet
Kept two hand and one chain-pump still in use.
The wind blew fresh again ; as it grew late
A squall came on, and while some guns broke loose,
A gust — which all descriptive power transcends —
Laid with one blast the ship on her beam ends.

XXXIII

It may be easily supposed, while this
Was going on, some people were unquiet,
That passengers would find it much amiss
To lose their lives, as well as spoil their diet ;
That even the able seaman, deeming his
Days nearly o'er, might be disposed to riot,
As upon such occasions tars will ask
For grog, and sometimes drink rum from the cask.

XXXIV

There 's nought, no doubt, so much the spirit calms
As rum and true religion : thus it was,
Some plundered, some drank spirits, some sung psalms,
The high wind made the treble, and as bass
The hoarse, harsh waves kept time ; fright cured the qualms
Of all the luckless landmen's sea-sick maws :
Strange sounds of wailing, blasphemy, devotion,
Clamored in chorus to the roaring ocean.

XXXVIII

But now there came a flash of hope once more ;
Day broke, and the wind lulled : the masts were gone,
The leak increased ; shoals round her, but no shore,

The vessel swam, yet still she held her own.
They tried the pumps again, and though, before
Their desperate efforts seemed all useless grown,
A glimpse of sunshine set some hands to bale —
The stronger pumped, the weaker thrummed a sail.

XXXIX

Under the vessel's keel the sail was past,
And for the moment it had some effect ;
But with a leak, and not a stick of mast,
Nor rag of canvas, what could they expect?
But still 't is best to struggle to the last,
'T is never too late to be wholly wrecked :
And though 't is true that man can only die once,
'T is not so pleasant in the Gulf of Lyons.

XL

There winds and waves had hurled them, and from thence,
Without their will, they carried them away ;
For they were forced with steering to dispense,
And never had as yet a quiet day
On which they might repose, or even commence
A jurymast or rudder, or could say
The ship would swim an hour, which, by good luck,
Still swam — though not exactly like a duck.

XLI

The wind, in fact, perhaps, was rather less,
But the ship laboured so, they scarce could hope
To weather out much longer ; the distress
Was also great with which they had to cope
For want of water, and their solid mess
Was scant enough : in vain the telescope
Was used — nor sail nor shore appeared in sight,
Nought but the heavy sea, and coming night.

XLIII

Then came the carpenter, at last, with tears
In his rough eyes, and told the captain, he
Could do no more : he was a man in years,
And long had voyaged through many a stormy sea,
And if he wept at length they were not fears
That made his eyelids as a woman's be,
But he, poor fellow, had a wife and children, —
Two things for dying people quite bewildering.

XLIV

The ship was evidently settling now
Fast by the head ; and, all distinction gone,
Some went to prayers again, and made a vow
Of candles to their saints — but there were none
To pay them with ; and some looked o'er the bow ;
Some hoisted out the boats ; and there was one
That begged Pedrillo for an absolution,
Who told him to be damned — in his confusion.

XLV

Some lashed them in their hammocks ; some put on
Their best clothes, as if going to a fair ;
Some cursed the day on which they saw the Sun,
And gnashed their teeth, and, howling, tore their hair ;
And others went on as they had begun,
Getting the boats out, being well aware
That a tight boat will live in a rough sea,
Unless with breakers close beneath her lee.

XLVIII

The other boats, the yawl and pinnace, had
Been stove in the beginning of the gale ;
And the long-boat's condition was but bad,
As there were but two blankets for a sail,

And one oar for a mast, which a young lad
Threw in by good luck over the ship's rail ;
And two boats could not hold, far less be stored,
To save one half the people then on board.

XLIX

'T was twilight, and the sunless day went down
Over the waste of waters ; like a veil,
Which, if withdrawn, would but disclose the frown
Of one whose hate is masked but to assail.
Thus to their hopeless eyes the night was shown,
And grimly darkled o'er the faces pale,
And the dim desolate deep : twelve days had Fear
Been their familiar, and now Death was here.

LI

At half-past eight o'clock, booms, hencoops, spars,
And all things, for a chance, had been cast loose,
That still could keep afloat the struggling tars,
For yet they strove, although of no great use :
There was no light in heaven but a few stars,
The boats put off o'ercrowded with their crews ;
She gave a hee!, and then a lurch to port,
And, going down head foremost — sunk, in short.

LII

Then rose from sea to sky the wild farewell —
Then shrieked the timid, and stood still the brave, —
Then some leaped overboard with dreadful yell,
As eager to anticipate their grave ;
And the sea yawned around her like a hell,
And down she sucked with her the whirling wave,
Like one who grapples with his enemy,
And strives to strangle him before he die.

LIII

And first one universal shriek there rushed,
 Louder than the loud Ocean, like a crash
 Of echoing thunder ; and then all was hushed,
 Save the wild wind and the remorseless dash
 Of billows ; but at intervals there gushed,
 Accompanied by a convulsive splash,
 A solitary shriek, the bubbling cry
 Of some strong swimmer in his agony.

THE ISLES OF GREECE

(From Canto III)

This famous lyric, an interlude in the narrative, is supposed to be sung by a wandering poet or minstrel. Its invocation to Greece as she was before the Revolution of 1821 connects itself with the spirited stanzas in *Childe Harold*, Canto II. Such poems rendered the name of Byron familiar and dear to the Greeks, long before the poet identified himself with the struggle for independence. In English poetry, at least, the dead glories of Greece have never found a nobler eulogist than Byron.

I

THE Isles of Greece, the Isles of Greece !
 Where burning Sappho¹ loved and sung,
 Where grew the arts of War and Peace,
 Where Delos² rose, and Phœbus sprung !
 Eternal summer gilds them yet,
 But all, except their Sun, is set.

¹ **Sappho** : generally considered the world's greatest poetess. She flourished toward the close of the seventh century B.C. The scanty remains of her poetry that we possess are distinguished by their lyric intensity and power.

² **Delos** : an island in the Ægean Sea, that rose from the waves at the command of Poseidon, to be the birthplace of Artemis and of her brother Apollo, god of poetry and music (see Gayley's *Classic Myths*, 1903, p. 63).

2

The Scian¹ and the Teian muse,²
 The Hero's harp, the Lover's lute,
 Have found the fame your shores refuse :
 Their place of birth alone is mute
 To sounds which echo further west
 Than your Sires' "Islands of the Blest."³

3

The mountains look on Marathon⁴ —
 And Marathon looks on the sea ;
 And musing there an hour alone,
 I dreamed that Greece might still be free ;
 For, standing on the Persians' grave,
 I could not deem myself a slave.

4

A King sate on the rocky brow
 Which looks o'er sea-born Salamis ;⁵
 And ships, by thousands, lay below,
 And men in nations ; — all were his !
 He counted them at break of day —
 And, when the Sun set, where were they ?

¹ **The Scian muse** : Homer. Scio, anciently known as Chios, an island in the Ægean Sea, was considered by the ancients as the most probable birthplace of Homer, the greatest of epic poets, who played "the hero's harp."

² **The Teian muse** : Anacreon, the Greek lyric poet, who excelled in love songs ("the lover's lute"), was born about 550 B.C. at Teos, an Ionian Greek town in Asia.

³ **"Islands of the Blest"** : in Greek mythology, the happy abodes far in the west to which those favored by the gods passed without dying. At first purely imaginary, these blessed isles were later identified with the Canaries.

⁴ **Marathon** : see note 2, p. 44.

⁵ **Salamis** : one of the most famous naval battles of history, in which the Greek fleet under Eurybiades utterly defeated the Persian fleet of Xerxes, the "King." It was fought 480 B.C. off the island of Salamis, near Athens.

5

And where are they? and where art thou,
My country? On thy voiceless shore
The heroic lay is tuneless now —

The heroic bosom beats no more !
And must thy Lyre, so long divine,
Degenerate into hands like mine?

6

'Tis something, in the dearth of Fame,
Though linked among a fettered race,
To feel at least a patriot's shame,
Even as I sing, suffuse my face ;
For what is left the poet here?
For Greeks a blush — for Greece a tear.

15

Fill high the bowl with Samian wine !
Our virgins dance beneath the shade —
I see their glorious black eyes shine ;
But gazing on each glowing maid,
My own the burning tear-drop laves,
To think such breasts must suckle slaves.

16

Place me on Sunium's¹ marbled steep,
Where nothing, save the waves and I,
May hear our mutual murmurs sweep ;
There, swan-like, let me sing and die :
A land of slaves shall ne'er be mine —
Dash down yon cup of Samian wine !

¹ **Sunium** : a promontory forming the southern extremity of Attica, now known as Cape Colonna. It was once crowned, at a height of three hundred feet above the sea, by a magnificent temple of Pallas Athena. The marble pillars still remain ; hence, "Sunium's marbled steep."

SWEET HOUR OF TWILIGHT

(From Canto III)

These tender and exquisite stanzas, in the midst of the cynicism and satire of *Don Juan*, are but another exhibition of Byron's versatility.

CII

AVE MARIA! blessèd be the hour!
The time, the clime, the spot, where I so oft
Have felt that moment in its fullest power
Sink o'er the earth — so beautiful and soft —
While swung the deep bell in the distant tower,
Or the faint dying day-hymn stole aloft,
And not a breath crept through the rosy air,
And yet the forest leaves seemed stirred with prayer.

CIII

Ave Maria! 't is the hour of prayer!
Ave Maria! 't is the hour of Love!
Ave Maria! may our spirits dare
Look up to thine and to thy Son's above!
Ave Maria! oh that face so fair!
Those downcast eyes beneath the Almighty Dove —
What though 't is but a pictured image? — strike —
That painting is no idol, — 't is too like.

CV

Sweet hour of Twilight! — in the solitude
Of the pine forest, and the silent shore
Which bounds Ravenna's immemorial wood,
Rooted where once the Adrian wave flowed o'er,

To where the last Cæsarean fortress¹ stood,
 Evergreen forest ! which Boccaccio's lore
 And Dryden's lay² made haunted ground to me,
 How have I loved the twilight hour and thee !

CVII

Oh, Hesperus !³ thou bringest all good things —
 Home to the weary, to the hungry cheer,
 To the young bird the parent's brooding wings ;
 The welcome stall to the o'erlaboured steer ;
 Whate'er of peace about our hearthstone clings,
 Whate'er our household gods protect of dear,
 Are gathered round us by thy look of rest ;
 Thou bring'st the child, too, to the mother's breast.

CVIII

Soft Hour ! which wakes the wish and melts the heart
 Of those who sail the seas, on the first day
 When they from their sweet friends are torn apart ;
 Or fills with love the pilgrim on his way
 As the far bell of Vesper makes him start,
 Seeming to weep the dying day's decay ;
 Is this a fancy which our reason scorns ?
 Ah ! surely Nothing dies but Something mourns !

¹ **The last Cæsarean fortress** : the palace of Odoacer, king of Italy, who, in 493 A.D., was defeated and murdered by Theodoric, king of the Ostrogoths.

² **Evergreen forest ; Boccaccio's lore ; Dryden's lay** : the famous pine forest near Ravenna was a favorite haunt of Byron's. Here Boccaccio, the great Italian story-teller, laid the scene of his tale of "the spectre huntsman," which was versified by Dryden in his *Theodore and Honoria*.

³ **Hesperus** : the evening star. Stanza CVII is in part paraphrased from Sappho.

ON THIS DAY I COMPLETE MY THIRTY-SIXTH
YEAR

This, with the exception of a few unimportant stanzas, Byron's last poem, was written three months before his death, in the midst of confusion and alarms. With its high resolves and its revelation of a devoted and heroic spirit, it must forever rank among the most powerful and impressive autobiographic poems in literature. It is at the same time both a dirge and a pæan.

I

'T IS time this heart should be unmoved,
Since others it hath ceased to move :
Yet, though I cannot be beloved,
Still let me love !

II

My days are in the yellow leaf ;
The flowers and fruits of Love are gone ;
The worm, the canker, and the grief
Are mine alone !

III

The fire that on my bosom preys
Is lone as some Volcanic isle ;
No torch is kindled at its blaze —
A funeral pile.

IV

The hope, the fear, the zealous care,
The exalted portion of the pain
And power of love, I cannot share,
But wear the chain.

V

But 't is not *thus* — and 't is not *here* —

Such thoughts should shake my soul, nor *now*,
Where Glory decks the hero's bier,
Or binds his brow.

VI

The Sword, the Banner, and the Field,
Glory and Greece, around me see !
The Spartan,¹ borne upon his shield,
Was not more free.

VII

Awake ! (not Greece — she *is* awake !)
Awake, my spirit ! Think through *whom*
Thy life-blood tracks its parent lake,
And then strike home !

VIII

Tread those reviving passions down,
Unworthy manhood ! — unto thee
Indifferent should the smile or frown
Of Beauty be.

IX

If thou regret'st thy youth, *why live ?*
The land of honourable death
Is here : — up to the Field, and give
Away thy breath !

¹ The Spartan, etc.: perhaps refers to the famous charge given by the Spartan mother to her son when he was about to depart for battle: "Return either *with* your shield or *upon* it."

X

Seek out — less often sought than found —
A soldier's grave, for thee the best ;
Then look around, and choose thy ground,
And take thy Rest.

MISSOLONGHI, January 22, 1824.

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